RABBINIC VIEWS OF PROPHECY

by

Norman M. Bronznick

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy,
in the Faculty of Philosophy,
Columbia University
1965

Abstract of

Rabbinic Views of Prophecy

by Norman M. Bronznick

The rabbinic literature, constituting phenomenologically an organic whole, is herein treated synoptically. It is also to be viewed as such a whole in its legacy to later generations.

On the question of whether the making of the prophet is the result of Grace, or of human endeavor, or of both, the rabbis are not dogmatic. Prophetic status may result from preparation, or be granted as recompense for a meritorious deed, or be an outright gift of Grace. Some predisposition is always necessary. The prophet, once chosen, will acquire the necessary virtues.

Wisdom, strength, riches, and humility are indispensable requirements. Another version substitutes tallness of stature for humility. Wisdom means worldly knowledge; strength denotes a psyche able to withstand the impact of the prophetic experience, thus permitting the prophet to enter into a colloquium with God; riches is the boldness with which the prophet may challenge divine justice; tallness of stature implies dignity of appearance. These qualities are counterbalanced by the virtue of humility.

Prophecy ultimately became the distinctive mark of Israel. With the erection of the Tabernacle, through which revelation was to be channeled, prophecy was cut off from the Gentiles. Even the proselyte may be handicapped in aspiring to prophecy. Impediments are illegitimate birth, uncircumcision, physical defectiveness, and celibacy, all barring or hampering the candidate.

Methods of legitimation will vary. The master prophet may prepare a disciple and confirm him into prophecy; existing prophets may attest to the legitimacy of the newcomer if his message accords with that made known to them; the supreme body of sages may pass on the neophyte's validity. The new prophet is asked for a confirming sign only when he appropriates the unique powers of the prophetic office. There is no retroactive discreditation if a true prophet turns false.

All revelation was given on Mount Sinai, whence each prophet has obtained his share. The Holy Spirit is not an ontological entity, but a divine quality manifesting itself in prophetism. Predictiveness is a characteristic mark of prophecy, appearing on each occasion as a direct revelation. Prophetic words are divine even when not the ipsissima verba of God, being what the prophet has extracted from the revelation. Although the prophet be fallible, he is protected by divine guidance from erring for too long. The oracle, although invested with its own potency, does not blindly seek self-fulfilment. Its delivery, constituting an act of prophecy, cannot be entrusted to a proxy.

In the battle against idolatry, prophecy serves as an antidote to divination. The predictive and eschatological element is an integral part of the prophet's preaching vocation. He is cast in a dual role: divine agent vis-à-vis the people, and their alter ego vis-à-vis God.

The prophet is authorized to suspend temporarily a Scriptural law, to name a new king, and to determine the location of the Sanctuary. His injunctions must be obeyed in public and in private affairs. The Prophets are thus termed "Divrei Kabbalah," words to be obeyed. The prophet, without power in the realm of the Halakha, can transform oral into written law by incorporation into his record.

Many explanations are offered for the cessation of prophecy, all suffering from some weakness. Prophecy ceased, according to the rabbis, as a result of certain sins. Actually, only prophetism, with its apostolic charge, power of injunction, and special prerogatives disappeared. All other revelatory aspects of the Holy Spirit persisted long after. Unlike prophecy, containing dialogue, the remaining aspects do not encompass such an experience. Only with the advent of the Messiah will prophecy again flourish.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	THE MAKING OF THE PROPHET.....	13
III.	PREREQUISITES AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR PROPHECY.....	26
IV.	IMPEDIMENTS AND HINDRANCES.....	57
V.	THE INAUGURATION AND THE ACCREDITATION OF THE PROPHET.....	88
VI.	THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PROPHETISM.....	113
VII.	THE AUTHORITY OF THE PROPHET.....	183
VIII.	CESSATION AND REEMERGENCE OF PROPHECY....	230
IX.	CONCLUSIONS.....	275
ABBREVIATIONS.....		292
SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY.....		293

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Our knowledge and understanding of the rabbinic, that is, Talmudic and midrashic, outlook on prophecy is to a large extent encrusted with the ideas of the medieval Jewish philosophers. We would be remiss if we failed to acknowledge their perceptive evaluations of many rabbinic passages dealing with prophecy. However, these philosophers, from Sa'adiah to Gersonides, viewed a good part of the rabbinic material from the perspective of Graeco-Arabic philosophy, which was current in their day. Most of them tailored many of their interpretations to fit these Graeco-Arabic modes of thought, while there were others, such as Yehudah ha-Levi, whose views were the result of antagonism and negative reaction to these ways of thinking.

Apart from their circumscribed view, a far greater shortcoming is their concentration in the main on the direct and explicit rabbinic pronouncements on prophecy, leaving mostly untapped and unmined the vast stores of the rabbinic exegetic comments on many Biblical passages, from which we can learn by inference far more about the rabbinic view of prophecy than we can from the direct rabbinic dicta.[1] For

---

[1] Cf. A Heschel, Torah Min ha-Shamayim (London & New York, 1962), p. VII, n.2.

these exegetical comments betray their innermost thoughts and reveal their untampered views concerning prophecy.

In modern times, with the phenomenal growth of prophetology, when prophecy became the object of close examination and searching studies, not enough primary attention has been devoted to the study of prophecy in the light of the rabbinic tradition. It is true that we find many references to rabbinic passages strewn in general works on prophecy, but the primary purpose of these references is to use them as support for whatever the particular author is attempting to expound,and not necessarily to discover what the rabbis had in mind. There exist also a number of valuable studies on certain aspects of prophecy in the light of the rabbinic texts, but these studies are restricted in scope.

An evaluation, even if only in capsule form, of some of these studies is in order. A good starting point is Torat Neviim[2] by Z. H. Chajes,since it is one of the first analytic treatments of prophecy as reflected in the rabbinic texts. This treatise is highly recommended by Solomon Schechter as of great value in its thoroughness and validity.[3] But it deals primarily with the problem of the part played by the prophets and their writings in the development of the Halakha.

---

[2] Zolkiew, 1836.

[3] Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York, 1923), p. 125, n.1.

He analyzes this problem and its fringe issues in great detail and with a good deal of acumen and ingenuity. We shall follow his views in their broad outlines with certain modifications in preference to the position taken by E. Urbach in his article "Halakha and Prophecy" (Heb.)[4]. It is Urbach's view that the fact that the rabbis base many laws on prophetic verses is proof that the sages believe the prophet authorized to reveal new laws by means of an oracle. This view is contrary to the entire tenor of rabbinic thought. This can be seen from the sources brought together by Bamberger in his study "Revelation of Torah After Sinai,"[5] to which we shall refer later. As to Urbach's citations, they are sufficiently explained by the thesis of Chajes, which Urbach chooses to disregard.

J. Abelson's work, The Immanence of God in Rabbinic Literature,[6] which for a long time served as a standard work in its field, is by now largely out of date. The field of prophetology has been enriched, in the fifty years since the publication of this book, by a host of new insights and findings. Being unaware of them, Abelson could not search for clues in the rabbinic literature regarding these considerations. Furthermore, because of the broad scope of his work, which takes in the entire range of effects of the

---

[4] In Tarbiz, XVIII (1946), 1-27.

[5] In HUCA, XVI (1941), 97-113.

[6] London, 1912.

workings of this Holy Spirit and the Divine Presence, the features of classical prophecy are not saliently defined. In too many instances prophecy is dealt with in a tangential manner.

E. Bass's doctoral dissertation, Die Merkmale der israelitischen Prophetie nach der traditionellen Auffassung des Talmud,[7] lacks both scope and penetration, as indicated by Heschel.[8] It suffers from the additional weakness of restricting itself, by design, mainly to Talmudic references, leaving almost untouched the vast treasures of the midrashim.

A. Cohen's chapter on prophecy in his Everyman's Talmud[9] suffers, in addition to the last-mentioned restriction, from leaning too heavily on the Maimonidean view of prophecy. Also, since the work was written for popular consumption, its treatment is by nature rather simplified and lacking in detail.

B. J. Bamberger's "Revelation of Torah After Sinai,"[10] to which reference has already been made, presents the essentially valid thesis that revelation, in the rabbinic view, is of a non-recurring character, especially with regard to the Law. It was the result of a unique act at Sinai transmitted solely through Moses. He scarcely touches on the nature of prophetism, which is outside the confines of his study.

---

[7] Kirchhain, [1917].

[8] Die Prophetie (Krakow, 1936), p. 16, n.5.

[9] New York, 1949.

[10] Supra, n.5.

H. A. Fischel's "Martyr and Prophet"[11] is an exhaustive and probing study of the relationship between prophecy and martyrology. However, in this author's zeal to prove the absoluteness of this relationship, he tends to overstate his case and is forced to look for shreds of proof in sources of dubious authenticity. The work, nevertheless, contains many sound and convincing observations, to which reference will be made in due course.

H. Parzen's "Ruah haKodesh in Tannaitic Literature"[12] focuses attention on the fact that the term Holy Spirit has a wide range of uses and meanings, a fact which cannot be disputed. The author fails, however, to delineate these nuances, except in the most general way.

Reference has already been made to one of Urbach's studies. He also has two other studies of concern to us. His "When Did Prophecy Cease?" (Heb.)[13] is a valid treatment of the sources, and one would be hard put to refute most of his conclusions. With one exception, and with additional observations, we shall incorporate his conclusions into our own study. His "Rabbinic Comments Concerning Heathen Prophets" (Heb.)[14] treats the rabbinic sources essentially from the historical perspective. However, aside from the historical motivations of some of these comments, the comments also had, or at least attained, objective

---

[11] In JQR, XXXVII (1947), 265-80.

[12] In JQR, XX (1930), 51-76.

[13] In Tarbiz, XVII (1945), 1-11.

[14] Ibid., XXV (1953), 272-289.

meaning once they were incorporated into the fabric of rabbinic thought. An understanding and evaluation of these comments as they became a factor in rabbinic thinking is, therefore, in order.

N. Glatzer's "A Study of the Talmudic Interpretation of Prophecy,"[15] which treats the rabbinic dicta on prophecy strictly from the perspective of Christian polemics and apologetics, is by nature highly tendentious, and greatly overreaches the mark. We will have occasion to refer to it and to comment thereon.

Reference should be made to G. F. Moore's Judaism,[16] wherein one will find scattered many valuable observations touching on prophecy. But, of course, these are sporadic in nature and limited in number.

There are a good many valid observations on prophecy from the rabbinic view in M. Kadushin's The Rabbinic Mind.[17] But, since this book deals primarily with the general workings of the Holy Spirit in post-Biblical times, the treatment of Biblical prophecy is incidental, and, as a result, lacks detail and comprehensiveness. We shall adopt some of this author's views, but with a change of stress in some instances, and with further amplification in other instances.

Finally, account must be taken of Heschel's fruitful labors in the field of prophetology. As part of the general scope of his book God In Search of Man,[18] many keen and in-

---

[15] In Review of Religion, X (1946), 115-137.

[16] Cambridge, 1927. [17] New York, 1952.

[18] New York, 1955.

cisive thoughts on prophecy are brought to light. His masterly work, The Prophets,[19] which is a widely expanded and much supplemented version of an earlier work of his, Die Prophetie, constitutes both a critical evaluation of the various views in the field of prophetology and an impressive and provocative presentation of the author's own views. However, this work is based on a direct analysis of the Biblical sources, without taking the rabbinic view into special consideration, except for desultory references to illustrate or to corroborate a particular point.

His Torah Min ha-Shamayim,[20] wherein is presented an analytic account of the Tannaitic theology, contains several sections on revelation. Although some of the views hark back to his general ideas on prophecy, they are of concern and great importance to us, since they are worked out in terms and in the light of the rabbinic tradition. However, not enough space is devoted in this book to Biblical prophecy, since the work is designed to deal with the entire gamut of interrelationships between God and man.

All in all, there clearly exists an unfilled need for a comprehensive and analytic study of prophecy as reflected in the rabbinic sources. The dissertation which follows is the end-product of an effort to fill this need. However, given the magnitude of the task and the limitations of the present investigation, it will of necessity be far from complete.

---

[19] New York, 1962 [20] London & New York, 1962.

One of the many difficulties in the accomplishment of this task is the fact that the rabbinic material consists of the thoughts, deliberations and pronouncements of a vast array of sages whose period of activity extends over a half millenium, thus precluding consistency of thought with regard to many of the issues. Yet, despite this apparently formidable obstacle, it is possible to reconstruct out of this disarray of amorphous material a balanced presentation which will be a reasonable account of the underlying rabbinic outlook on prophecy.

There is no denying that irrespective of the conflicting opinions which abound, and despite the long period of time during which the rabbinic comments have come to light, these various comments are all bound by the same common denominator. They share joint points of departure, similar patterns of thought, and are governed by the same method and discipline of reasoning. As a result, it is no exaggeration to suggest that there exists, paradoxically speaking, a greater unity of thought in the conflicting opinions of the Talmudic-midrashic rabbis than between an opinion of theirs and a similar opinion on the same topic by a modern scholar.

In fact, many controversies between the sages were not permitted to remain forever frozen and irreconcilable. Finding justification in the famous rabbinic doctrine, "Both opinions are the words of the living God,"[21] many contemporary sages and those of subsequent generations acted in eclectic manner and

---

[21] BT Gittin 6b, and parallels. Cf. BT Megillah 15b.

largely adopted many antagonistic views, either by modifying them or by applying them in different situations.[22]

The Talmudic literature has thus been aptly termed "yam ha-Talmud," the Talmudic sea. As the sea submerges almost beyond recognition all the waters brought to it by the innumerable rivers and their tributaries, the "Talmudic sea" diffuses and assimilates, in the end, all the diverse and divergent opinions of its many contributory sages. Hence the Talmudic literature may be analyzed not only in terms of the myriad influences by which it was molded, but may with equal value be studied in its capacity as an integrated whole.

Heschel, recognizing that many important works have been written from the perspective that there is a unity of thought in the Aggadic material,[23] is determined to show in his Torah Min ha-Shamayim that there are two variant strands running through Tannaitic thought, that of R. Akiba and that of R. Ishmael. He is, nevertheless, forced to the conclusion that "in the end the view of R. Akiba captivated the heart...and became so interwoven and embroidered into the thought fabric of the Aggada that it is no longer discernible as a distinct entity. R. Ishmael was rejected in favor of R. Akiba, and even his disciples have not always followed in the footsteps of their master."[24]

---

[22]Cf. BT Ḥullin 85a, 108b; BT Temurah 11b; BT Arakhim 28a; BT Betzah 2b; BT Shabbat 37a, 44a, 126b.

[23]Ibid., p. XXXII, and cf. p. 10. Cf. S. W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, (2d ed.; Philadelphia, 1952), V. II, p. 434, n.25.

[24]Ibid., p. LIX.

It is true that the rabbinic texts abound in countless controversies, but this does not impair their inner unity. In the words of Kadushin: "The organic quality of rabbinic theology accounts for that paradox, observed long ago by students, which allows differences of opinion to exist without causing the basic unity of rabbinic thought to suffer."[25] Thus, as Kadushin concludes elsewhere, "Disparate passages drawn from rabbinic sources that were composed at different periods and under divergent circumstances can yet be brought together so as to elucidate a rabbinic concept ...and this indeed is the conclusion of the great masters in the field."[26]

In the words of Zunz: "Even though an Aggadic dictum is in the main the opinion of its exponent, it fits into the general fundamental principle which was developed in organic fashion."[27] Bacher could thus assert "that the Aggada of both Tannaim and Amoraim is of the same character as to method and content."[28]

Neither does the origin of an idea exercise a determining and lasting influence upon the character and meaning of the idea as it ultimately evolves in the context of rabbinic thought. Being organismic in nature, rabbinic thinking processes digest and assimilate to their own character even matters originating in alien soil, in the same manner as the food

---

[25] The Theology of Seder Eliahu (New York, 1932), p.24.

[26] Organic Thinking (New York, 1938), p.2.

[27] Quoted by I. Heinemann in his Darkei ha-Aggada (2d ed.; Jerusalem, 1954), p.200, n.93.

[28] Quoted by E. Urbach in Ha-Entziklopedia ha-Ivrit, s. v. Aggada.

consumed by a lion will turn into lion flesh, whereas the same food, when consumed by a dog, will become only dog flesh.

The rabbis, being fully aware of the organismic process, compare the growth and proliferation of the words of the Torah to the growth of a plant.[29] What is meant by this metaphor is that the Torah increases not by accretion, like a stone, but rather by intussusception, like a tree, which changes everything it absorbs from the soil and its environment into part of its own genetic make-up.

As an illustration of this truth an example may be taken from the development of any language. The etymology of a word is no sure indication of its ultimate semantic meaning, for the meaning of a word is changed and shaped by the normative and other processes of the new language. Thus, for example, the pejorative knave in modern English has little in common with its Anglo-Saxon progenitor, which meant simply a youth, a boy, the meaning of its modern German counterpart.

All in all, Bamberger, writing in defense of Wolfson's treatment of the rabbinic dicta in his Philo, is undoubtedly correct that "despite certain changes, modifications, and development, Pharisaic-rabbinic thought remained largely homogenous over a period of many centuries."[30]

Hence, it is no idle venture to present the rabbinic view of prophecy as a composite study of the seemingly amorphous mass of rabbinic dicta without always paying attention to the sage

---

[29] BT Ḥagigah 3b.

[30] "The Dating of Aggadic Materials," JBL, LXVIII, 123.

in question. For whether we shall call the rabbinic literature "normative" with Moore,[31] or "native" with Wolfson,[32] or "organic" with Kadushin and Heinemann,[33] it constitutes phenomenologically an organic whole, possessed of an inner coherence and consistency.

Even for those who may object to such a view, there is still merit and value in a synthetic treatment of the rabbinic literature, at least in terms of its legacy to subsequent generations. For there is no disputing the fact that the influence it exercised did not spring from its various constituent parts, but rather from its constituted entirety. Whether the entire mass of rabbinic dicta is to be viewed as an organic entity or as a cumulative conglomerate, it was transmitted to successive generations in its totality, and studied by them as a coherent whole.

Hence, there is value in a synoptic study of the rabbinic texts without always trying to ascertain the original author of every passage and then place it in its proper historical setting, a task which cannot be accomplished with any degree of finality.[34] A composite study will yield a clear and reasonable picture of the over-all rabbinic view as it became solidified in the various Talmudic and midrashic compilations passed on to post-Talmudic generations as the legacy of rabbinic Judaism.

---

[31] Cf. E. R. Goodenough, "Wolfson's Philo," JBL, LXVII, 89.

[32] Ibid. [33] Darkei ha-Aggada (2d ed.; 1954), pp. 8-10.

[34] Cf. S. W. Baron, op. cit., pp. 295-297; B. J. Bamberger, loc. cit., pp. 115-123.

CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF THE PROPHET

Ever since prophecy became a subject for objective study, a debate has been raging as to the basic qualifications that go into the making of the prophet. This problem has engaged the attention of a host of thinkers throughout the ages, and opinions have ranged far and wide from one extreme to the other.[1]

Fundamentalists and pious thinkers have tended to adopt the facile view that it is simply a matter of Grace or God's inscrutable will. Prophecy is purely a gift bestowed upon a man chosen by Divine Grace for reasons and purposes known only to God's infinite wisdom. At the time the prophet is chosen, he may be richly or poorly endowed, suited or unsuited for the office of prophecy.[2] However, as soon as he is elevated to this office, this person undergoes an inner metamorphosis, and he acquires all the necessary requisites and desirable virtues.[3]

---

[1] Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, part 2, chap. 32. Cf. P. E. Kretzmann, "Modern Views About Inspiration and the Truth of Scriptures,". Princeton Theological Review, XXVIII (1929), 227-244.

[2] Maimonides, loc. cit.; cf. Targ. J. to Isa. 40:13; cf. A. Guttman, "The significance of Miracles for Talmudic Judaism," HUCA, XX (1947), 366.

[3] Cf. Tan., Emor. 6. Buber, p. 84; Lev. R. 26:9, p.611. This is what happened to Moses. Before he was chosen, he said: "I am not a man of words" (Ex.4:10) because he was tongue-tied. However, after having accepted his charge, "his tongue was cured and he began to speak many words" (Deut. R. 1:1).

On the other extreme we find the view of the rationalists who treat prophecy as a natural psychological phenomenon. It is the end product of human endeavor in the realm of the inner life, and it is thus attainable by the perfection of one's intellectual, moral and imaginative faculties.

Maimonides, a loyal disciple of the rationalistic school of thought, subscribes to this view with but one notable reservation. He upholds the view that prophecy is a natural outcome of all-round human perfection, but he concedes that God may interfere in the progress of this natural process and withhold prophecy even from the most accomplished of men. However, such an eventuality is to be classed as a direct violation of the laws of nature and it is, therefore, in the eyes of Maimonides, "as exceptional as any other miracle, and acts in the same way."[4]

There are others, too, who make prophecy dependent on human initiative and effort, but for different reasons. According to the cultic school of thought, prophecy is merely a phase of the institution of divination. The prophet is reduced to the status of one of the many functionaries who populated the cult. Accordingly, the prophet is actually attached to an established sanctuary.[5] As such, any suitable man may

---

[4] Loc. Cit.

[5] A. Haldar, Association of Cult Prophets Amongst Ancient Semites (Uppsala, 1945), passim; A. Johnson, The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel (Cardiff, 1944), passim. Cf. S. W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (2d ed.; Philadelphia, 1952), V. I, p. 153; M. Z. Segal, Mevo ha-Mikra (Jerusalem, 1960), V.II, pp. 244-246.

qualify for the office of prophecy without having to wait for a personal call from above. In fact, one may induce prophetic oracles by a variety of mechanical devices in vogue at the time. The prophet thus attains his calling in a manner similar to the priest's, by training and a prescribed set of rules.

This approach holds true, to a large extent, also for the ecstatic view of prophecy.[6] According to this school of thought, the prophet is a mystic of a sort, and he obtains his message while he is in a state of ecstatic frenzy. This ecstasy is brought on by the prophet's own doing with the aid of various devices of his own choosing. What sets the prophet apart from the mystic at large is that the prophet seeks this mystical union with the Divine not for his own spiritual delight and enlightenment, as is the case with the regular mystic, but for the purpose of learning the divine will so that he may eventually make it known to his fellow men and share this divine illumination with them. In sum, prophets of this sort are by their very nature self-made, self-initiated and do not depend on a call from above, nor do they wait for it.

---

[6] Cf. A. Lods, The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism, trans. S. H. Hooke (London, 1937), p. 58; J. Abelson, The Immanence of God in Rabbinic Literature (London, 1912) pp. 242ff; Y. Kaufman, Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisr'elit (Tel-Aviv, 1937-56), V. I, pp. 528-29. For a listing of the adherents of this view, see A. J. Heschel The Prophets (New York, 1962), p.345, notes, 43-47. For those opposing this view, see ibid., p. 350, notes 64-65.

Between these two opposite poles, of either total dependence on Divine Grace or complete self-reliance on one's own potentialities and devices, there remain several middle views. All these middle views are in basic accord that in the making of the prophet, both Divine Grace and human readiness are indispensable.[7] But there will be ample room for variations of opinions as to the exact apportionment of weight and stress to be alloted to each of these two vital elements. Is greater stress to be laid on the part played by Divine Grace or should perhaps a larger measure of credit be given to the human factor in this equation? Furthermore, there is much room for differences of opinion as to the nature of human readiness required. Is it intellectual, moral, religious or is it something altogether innate? In view of all these considerations, it can readily be seen how it is possible to make up to order any desired formula that will account for the making of the prophet, all depending on the particular ratio of all these constituent elements.

A. Heschel gives primacy to divine initiative, but for a reason altogether different from the usual idea of divine grace or divine will. It is paradoxically the antithesis of divine grace or will. Revelation derives not so much from God's goodness as from God's needs, as it were, because there is a need to reveal Himself to man, to make Himself known to man.

---

[7] Cf. H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel (Philadelphia, 1957), pp.23-24; H. Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness (London, 1947), p. 11.

> Revelation is not an act of His seeking, but of His being sought after, an act of God's search for man... To characterize revelation as a prophetic insight or experience is to reduce reality to a perception. Seen from man's aspect, to receive a relevation is to witness God turning towards man....Revelation means... that not only man needs God, but God also is in need of man.[8]

Quite in a class by itself stands the view of Yehudah ha-Levi who asserts that the prophetic sense is inborn, that the prophet is a superior being from birth, to the point that he constitutes a species all his own. From birth he is in possession of an extraordinary perception, "an inner eye," by which he is able to behold divine visions and apprehend the spiritual world.[9] To put it in epigrammatic form, prophets are born, not made![10]

The rabbinic view. - Considering the foregoing, it should prove edifying to learn the rabbinic view regarding this crucial question. It seems the consensus of opinion of the writers on this subject that the rabbis, too, adopt a middle view.

---

[8] God in Search of Man (New York, 1955), p. 198, and cf. p. 196. Cf. rabbinic interpretation of the verse, "Is Ephraim a darling son unto Me...For as much as I speak with him..." (Jer. 31:20), which is reconstructed to mean that "even when I say that I will not speak with him, I cannot bear...for certainly My locution is with him." (Lev. R.2:3, p. 40); cf. I. Efros, JQR, XLI (1951), 366.

[9] Kuzari, part 4,3; cf. ibid., part 1, 95, Cf. H. A. Wolfson, "Hallevi and Maimonides on Prophecy," JQR, XXXII (1942), 345-70; XXXII (1943), 49-82.

[10] As a footnote to the entire discussion the following verse is worthy of consideration. "A prophet from thy midst will the Lord thy God raise up for thee" (Deut. 18:15). The emphasis in this verse is on God who raises up a prophet rather than on the prophet who is going to rise up by his own initiative. However, this argument is vitiated by another verse, "I raised prophets out of your sons and Nazirites out of your youth" (Amos 2:11). The pairing of prophets and Nazirites as the objects of "I raised" would seem to prove that divine "raising" does not necessarily mean total dependence on divine initiative in attaining prophecy just like the Nazirites who do not stand in need of divine initiative to attain their status, unless we take this pairing of the two as another instance of the grammatical form of zeugma.

Maimonides, his own personal view notwithstanding, admits that the rabbis hold "that it depends chiefly on the will of God who will prophesy, and at what time, and that He only selects the best and the wisest."[11]

A similar opinion is expressed by H. A. Wolfson: "According to the Jewish view, prophecy, like any act of individual providence, has in it an element of divine grace and selection, and the qualifications required are those which render man fit to be selected by God for the divine gift of prophecy."[12]

A. Cohen, ostensibly summarizing the Talmudic view, but actually leaning heavily on Maimonides, concludes: "Prophency was not a gift conferred by God arbitrarily upon a number of persons, but was a crowning point of exceptional mental and spiritual equipment."[13]

Evidently, there is a tendency to wrap up the rabbinic view into a neat package by devising a pat formula which will encompass all outstanding cases of prophecy. Such an approach superficially suggests itself by the rabbinically - composed benediction to be recited after the public reading from the Prophets in the synagogue: "Blessed art Thou O Lord...who has t

---

[11] See supra, note 1.

[12] Philo (Cambridge, 1947), V. II, p. 47.

[13] Everyman's Talmud (New York, 1949), p. 121.

chosen fit prophets..."[14] This benediction apparently incorporates into one entity the two elements of divine choice and the prophet's fitness, thus supporting the thesis of their mutual interdependence.

But upon closer examination, such a definite conclusion is not warranted by the wording of this benediction, for it does not purport to give us a rigorous definition of the making of the prophet. Neither does it disclose what is the exact weight of God's choosing and the scope of the prophet's suitability. All that is asserted in this benediction is that the prophets were suitable vehicles for the particular missions for which God had chosen them, and nothing more can be justifiably deduced.

On the contrary, judging from the many oblique remarks in this regard, it would appear that the rabbis were not at all dogmatic, and that is why they did not devise an all-inclusive formula. The rabbis adopted a far more reasonable and balanced approach to this subject. There does not exist only one solitary road to the attainment of prophecy. There are many alternate roads, all leading from different directions converging on the same goal. In the rabbinic scheme there is ample room to allow for a variety of possibilities and contingencies.

---

[14]Soferim 13:9. It is incorrect to render the Hebrew phrase "neviim tovim" as "good prophets," as done by most translators of the prayer book. In the context of this benediction the word "tovim" should be rendered as "fit." This can be seen from the rabbinic comment on the verse, in Ex. 2:2, "And she saw that he was good" (Heb., "tov"), which is explained to mean "that he was fit for prophecy" (BT Soṭa 12a). Cf. Iyyum Tefillah in Siddur Otzar ha-Tefillot, ad. loc.

There are instances where, according to the rabbis, prophecy was initiated and decreed from on high, as were those of Moses, Jonah and Jeremiah who were involuntarily commissioned as prophets. Commenting on the verse, "But He has chosen and who can turn Him back, and what He Himself desires, He does" (Job 23:13), the rabbis state:

> When He pronounces a decree on man, none can revoke it... How Jonah tried to escape God's mission...yet he was compelled to go... How long Jeremiah refused to prophesy, yet he was compelled to go against his will... How reluctant was Moses to go on the divine mission...yet in the end he was compelled to go...15

Isaiah, on the other hand, is an example of one who willingly chose to become a prophet. This is how the rabbis understand Isaiah's cheerful response, "Here am I, send me!" (Isa. 6:8), to God's undirected and unspecified call, "Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?" (ibid.).[16]

Because of necessity and for ulterior reasons, God will grant a prophetic revelation even to individuals who are neither suited nor deservant. This is exemplified by God's speaking to Abimelech (Gen. 20:6) and to Laban (Gen. 31:24), two individuals who certainly were not worthy, yet they were elevated to the status of prophets ad hoc[17] by God's fiat, for

---

[15]Ex. R. 4:3; cf. Mid. Ag. to Deut., p. 160. Cf. rabbinic comment on the verse, "No one has power over the spirit to restrain the spirit" (Kohel. 8:8) in Kohel. R. 8:11. According to one rabbinic interpretation, Jeremiah was tricked into becoming a prophet (Ekha Zuṭa 1:7; Yalk. Shim., II, 1009).

[16]Pesiḳta R., 33, p.151; PSRK, 16, p.125b; Seder Eliahu R., Chap. 16, p.82.

[17]Gen. R. 52:5, p.544; 74:7, p.864; but cf. Mishnat R. Eliezer, p.119.

the express benefit of Abraham and Jacob respectively.[18] Balaam, too, was elevated to prophecy for ulterior reasons: to forestall a likely complaint of discrimination from the part of the pagan nations, and in order to invalidate a possible excuse for their sins if they had no prophets.[19] Similarly, we are told that the entire Jewish people was elevated to the level of prophets, which enabled each of them to hear the Ten Commandments, even though not all were fully qualified for such an experience. This was done in order to obviate a possible excuse for their worshipping the golden calf at a later time.[20]

There was an instance, according to one rabbinic tradition, where God caused the Holy Spirit to rest on a false prophet for a particular purpose. Because the true prophet ate at the table of the false prophet against the express command of God, the false prophet was instructed by God to inform the true prophet of his due penalty.[21]

---

[18]Tan., va-yetze, 12; Agg. Beresh., chap. 66 (67); Bereshit Rabbati, Albeck, p. 132.

[19]Num. R. 20:1; Tan., Balak, beg.; Seder Eliahu Zuṭa, chap. 10, p. 191.

[20]Ex. R. 41:3; cf. Pesikta R., chap. 20, p. 98b.

[21]Seder Eliahu R., chap. (12) 13, p. 60; but cf. BT Sanhedrin 104a; PT Sanhedrin 11:7, p. 30c.

There are also instances where it is possible to induce, if not force, prophetic experiences by means of vigorous preparations. The rabbis ascribe to certain individuals an active pursuit of and ardent quest for the attainment of prophecy. Commenting on the verse, "And I applied my heart to seek and search after wisdom..." (Kohel. 1:13), the rabbis declare: "You have searched after the words the Law.... Behold, I am causing the Holy Spirit to rest upon you!"[22] In addition to his own direct efforts of self improvement, Solomon fasted forty days, just as Moses did when he went up to Mt. Sinai, to bring him closer to God so that he might attain the prophetic state.[23] Of David, too, it is reported by the rabbis that he prayed to God to endow him with the Holy Spirit.[24]

A pathetic example of a person who eagerly sought prophecy, and, when it was not given to him, complained bitterly, is the case of Baruch B. Neriah, disciple of Jeremiah. His failure to achieve his goal was not due to personal shortcomings or to insufficient effort, but it issued from the particular state of the Jewish people at the time. Were it not for this fact, he would have become a prophet as a result of his endeavors and devotion to this cause.[25] In fact, according to another rabbinic tradition, he did become a prophet

---

[22]Cant. R. 1:7 [23]Mid. Prov. 1; Yalk. Shim., II, 929

[24]Mid. Ps. 1:1.

[25]Mekilta, pisha, 1, p. 5; Targ. J. to Jer. 45:3.

in the end.[26]

What is the proper method for one to follow in the preparation for the recipience of the Holy Spirit? There is one rabbinic tradition which spells it out in elaborate detail. It sets up a scale of successive virtues and qualities which one is to foster in his pursuit of the Holy Spirit:

> Heedfulness leads to cleanliness, and cleanliness leads to purity, and purity leads to abstinence, and abstinence leads to holiness, and holiness leads to humility, and humility leads to the fear of sin, and the fear of sin leads to saintliness, and saintliness leads to the [gift of the] Holy Spirit.[27]

An extreme case of the attainment of prophetic revelations unaided by the expressed will of God is that of Ahitophel, whom the rabbis credit with the possession of the Holy Spirit,[28] and that of Balaam, according to one rabbinic tradition. Concerning these two, the rabbis declare that "they snatched it by themselves."[29] In this category may also be included the type of revelation which the rabbis describe by the expression, "I have heard it from behind the Pargod (celestial curtain),"[30] which represents a kind of eavesdropping on God's conversation with the celestial court. The rabbis employ Eliphaz' description

---

[26]Seder Olam R., chap. 20; BT Megillah 14b; 15a; PT Sota 9:14, p. 24b; Num. R. 10:14.

[27]Mishna, Sota, end; cf. PT Shabbat 1:3, p.3c, and parallels. M.Ch.Luzzatto composed his famous ethical treatise Mesillat Yesharim to explain this passage in detail.

[28]PT Sanhedrin 10:2, p.29a.

[29]Num. R.22:6.Although this source talks about"wisdom", but in this context "wisdom" stands for the prophetic effects of the Holy Spirit as can be seen by analogy from Ex. R. 31:2.

[30]BT Berakhot 18b; BT Hagigah 15a; cf. BT Sota 49a; cf. Mekilta, ba-hodesh, 2, p. 210.

of his prophecy: "To me a word came stealthily, and my ear caught a whisper of it" (Job 4:12), as an equivalent term for eavesdropping behind the celestial curtain.[31] Thus, here we have an account of an actual instance of one's receiving a prophetic revelation on his own power with only the passive consent of God.

From the several cases brought to light thus far, as well as from those which will be cited in the next chapter, it becomes rather evident that the rabbis do not subscribe to any particular formula for the making of the prophet. However, regardless of the variety of ways available to the aspirant prophet, and despite the decisive force exercised by Divine Grace, the rabbis would not consider the possibility of God's granting prophecy to the wholly unprepared and fully unsuitable individual. This is what is indicated in the rabbinic passage describing King Ahaz' scheme to choke off the Divine Presence from Israel by closing the schools of learning, and thus:

> If there are no young pupils, there will be no old ones; if there are no old ones, there will be no sages; if there are no sages, there will be no prophets; if there are no prophets, there will be no Holy Spirit....[32]

Apparently, the rabbis agree with the basic assumption of Ahaz that without ready and suited individuals, there can be no flourishing of the Holy Spirit. It thus follows that a measure

---

[31] BT Sanhedrin 89b; Tan., va-yerah, 22; cf. Batei Midrashot, Wertheimer, v.II, p. 169

[32] PT Sanhedrin 10:2, p. 28b; but cf. parallels (Gen. R. 42:2; Lev. R. 11:7, p. 230; Ruth R., petihta, 7).

of fitness is a necessary condition for the attainment of prophecy. But, on the other hand, given even a small measure of fitness, prophecy may then be reached by a variety of avenues, some of which may be paved by the good will of Divine Grace, while others by man's own enterprising endeavors. In essence, prophecy may be attained both by elevation of Divine Grace and by escalation of human effort!

CHAPTER III

PREREQUISITES AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR PROPHECY

As brought out in the previous chapter, the rabbis have not attempted to devise a set of standard qualifications to apply equally to all the prophets. Nevertheless, they were fully aware of the necessity for every would-be prophet to possess either an eminent quality or a singular merit of one sort or another. This they readily admitted, but they allowed for a wide divergence in the essence and in the scope of these particular qualities or merits. Certain virtues,being of a higher order,may assure their possessor of a greater likelihood of acquiring prophecy, whereas other virtues,being of a lesser order,are less likely to do so.

A clearer picture of the various qualifications and their relative value and importance can be obtained by classifying them into two categories: (1) Necessary but not sufficient (2) Sufficient but not necessary. The first category will include all such preliminary requirements which by themselves do not enable one to attain prophecy, yet no prophecy is generally attainable without them. The second category will contain all such virtues, each one of which is quite capable of qualifying one for the attainment of prophecy.

Necessary-but-not-sufficient qualities. - There is a widely known rabbinic pronouncement which reads, "God causes the Divine Presence to rest only on one who is strong, wealthy,

wise and humble; and all of them are derived from Moses."[1] We can readily give our quick assent to the establishment of wisdom and humility as requirements for prophecy, but it seems rather odd and difficult to accept wealth and physical prowess as reasonable requirements for such a spiritual venture as is prophecy. Maimonides, grappling with this difficulty, rationalizes these requirements by spiritualizing their meaning.[2] Taking note of the treatment of these terms in a different connection, Maimonides applies this treatment to our case of prophecy. These terms are thus defined elsewhere: "Who is

---

[1] BT Nedarim 38a; cf. BT Shabbat 92a. The expression "causes the Divine presence to rest on..." is in this context as well as in many other connections synonymous with the granting of prophecy. See Maimonides, Eight Chapters, chap. 7: J. Abelson. op. cit., pp. 263, 377-379; E. Urbach, Tarbiz, XVIII (1945), 2, n.13. Concerning the quality of riches, R. Yohanan explicitly states that "all prophets were rich" (ibid.), which makes it sufficiently clear that this passage treats of prophecy and not of any other divine or mystic experience.

[2] Eight Chapters, chap. 7; Iggeret Teiman , ed. Halkin, p. 88; Guide of the Perplexed, part 2, chap. 36. That it should not be taken literally is evident from the fact that Jeremiah (9:22) deprecates these very same qualities. Cf. Tan., Buber, Mattot, 8, p. 160, and parallels; Seder Eliahu Zuta, chap. 24, p. 44. The fact that the Talmud in commenting on this passage, discussed "riches" and "strength" in material and physical terms does not negate the assertion that their non-physical equivalents are really meant. For it is not unusual for the rabbis to interchange the example and its exemplification, the symbol and its symbolization. This becomes apparent from the fact that Moses' material riches is credited to the chippings of the Second Tablets, which were made of a precious stone, but this event happened long after Moses has been serving as a prophet. Hence the quality of "riches" as a prerequisite for the attainment of prophecy must have reference to a different kind of riches. But there is no denying that the rabbis have also interest in seeing to it that these qualities are also true in their simple sense. Cf. Ch. J. D. Azulai's Petah Enayim to BT Shabbat 92a.

strong? He who controls his instinct. Who is rich? He who is happy with his portion."[3]

We could easily be charmed into accepting such laudable identifications were it not for the fact that these selfsame terms have been variously defined by the rabbis in different connections.[4] Such being the case, we have no right to adopt one definition over against the other when we come to apply it in the context of prophecy.

But to our good fortune, the rabbis themselves have supplied us with the key to this problem. From the manner in which they employ these terms within the framework of prophecy, we can reconstruct, with a fair degree of certainty, the underlying meaning of these terms as they apply to prophecy.

Commenting on the verse, "Mighty beings who do His bidding, who hear His word" (Ps 103:20), the rabbis apply it to the prophets and particularly to Moses.

---

[3]Mishna Aboth 4:1.

[4]BT Kiddushin 49b; ADRN, chaps. 23, 25; BT Shabbat 25b; BT Ketubot 68a; BT Nedarim 41a; BT Hagigah 14a. Cf. Isaac Heinemann, Darkei ha-Aggadah, pp. 91-92, note 109. In fact, Maimonides himself in one instance takes the quality of "strength" in a moral sense (ibid), while in a different instance he takes it in the sense of courage with which the prophet must face his audience (Guide of the Perplexed, part 2, chap. 38).

> Is it possible that a burden which is too heavy for six hundred thousand should be light for one? All of Israel standing before Mt. Sinai said, 'If we continue to hear the voice of the Lord our God, we shall die' (Deut. 5:25), but Moses heard the sound of the very Locution and he remained alive.[5]

Thus we see that under the category of strength the rabbis subsume the possession of a strong mental constitution, capable of withstanding the shattering impact of the awesome sight of the prophetic vision and its terrifying effects.[6]

---

[5]Lev. R. 1:1, 1:4, pp. 5, 15; cf. Mid. Ps. 103:18; Tan., vayikra, 1; Yalk. Shim., II, 860.

[6]That prophetic revelations produce such a devastating effect is indicated in several Biblical instances: Ex. 20:16; Ez. 1:28; 3:15, 23; Job 4:13-15; Dan. 8:27. Cf. Mid. Ps. 103:5; Y. Kaufman, op. cit., v. I, pp. 528, 529. This will explain why the Biblical term mora' (awe) is interpreted in several instances as divine visions or revelations, for example, Haggadah shel Pesah, (ed. Goldschmidt, Tel-Aviv, 1947), p. 41; Targ. O. to Deut. 34:12; Targ. J. to Jer. 32:21. It has been suggested by L. Finkelstein in HTR, XXXI (1938), 297, n.16, that the rabbis had the variant reading mar'eh (vision) instead of mora' (awe). Cf. D. Goldschmidt, ibid. and his second edition (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 37. However, such an assumption is wholly unnecessary because the rabbis base their interpretation not on a variant reading, but on the strength of metonymy, the rhetorical device which permits the interchange of cause and effect. Since revelation is often the cause for the experiencing of awe, then mora' (awe) may be used as a metonym for revelation. There is a similar instance in the frequent use of yir'ah (fear) as a term for a deity (e.g. BT Sanhedrin 106a), which is clearly a case of metonymy.

Abraham is similarly praised as being of "great power" since God communicated with him by means of "locutions and visions,"[7] which are of a far greater direct impact than the other kinds of prophetic communications.

But important as this virtue of mental strength may be, it is merely passive in character. All it requires of the prophet is to maintain his equilibrium and retain his self-consciousness and identity. This alone is not sufficient in itself, for it turns the prophet into no more than a reliable transmitting agent. The rabbis have rounded out the strong psyche of the prophet by demanding from it activeness and aggressiveness as well. It is not enough that the prophet does not disintegrate in the face of the overpowering experience of the divine locution, he must possess the strength to enter fearlessly into a wrestling match with it, and come out at times the victor.[8] Such was the actual case with Moses. The rabbis inform us that the final verse in the Pentateuch, which describes Moses as having had a "mighty hand," refers to the time when Moses was on Mt. Sinai and, because the Jews worshipped the golden calf, "God wanted to snatch the Tablets out of the hands of Moses, but the hand of Moses became strong and he snatched them from Him."[9] What the rabbis are trying

---

[7]Gen. R. 44;5, p. 429; cf. Lev. R. 1:4, p. 13; PRE, chap. 28; Ag.Ber., chap. 14.

[8]Cf. A. Heschel, Die Prophetie (Krakow, 1936), p. 124.

[9]PT Ta'anit 4:8, p. 68c.

to dramatize by this story is simply the fact that Moses did not lose himself, but instead courageously defended and fought for the Jewish people's interests.

In fact, this is the nature of the very texture of prophetic prayer and, particularly, intercessory prayer. It is not so much begging for mercy, but rather demanding it; it is not so much apologizing, but rather arguing and debating with God even while realizing the infinite greatness of God and the infinitesimal smallness of man.[10] This is what the rabbis meant by the quality of strength required of the prophet. Abraham is said to have fought God with strength when he argued, "Far be it from Thee to do such a thing to slay the righteous with the wicked" (Gen. 18:25).[11] According to a

---

[10]Cf. F. Heiler, Prayer, trans. S. McComb (London, 1932), pp. 284ff., where an illuminating account of prophetic prayer is given. To the rabbis, prophetic prayer does not consist of honeyed and soothing words: "The prophets know that God is true and therefore they do not flatter him." (PT Berakhot 7:4, p. 11c; PT Meggilah 3, end, p. 74c; cf. BT Yoma 69b). To them, prayer is compared to fighting: "Who will wage war for My children, who will pray for them when they sin" (Tan., va-ethanan, 6). Not only is prayer likened to a battle of defense, but at times it is likened to an offensive battle. It is viewed as an assault upon God, as it were: "Moses cast words towards God [i.e. spoke harshly], as it is written, 'and he prayed to God' (Num. 11:2), do not read 'to God,' but 'against God'" (BT Berakhot 32a). The effectiveness of Elijah's prayer is compared to the fighting strength of chariots and horsemen (BT Mo'ed Katan 26a). Cf. BT Ta'anit 23b where those who were successful in prayer are termed "the strong ones."

[11]Gen. R. 49:10 p. 512; Tan., Buber, va'yera, p. 91; Ag. Ber. 22; Yalk. Sh. to Job 41:4.

rabbinic interpretation, the verse, "His seed will be strong in the land" (Ps. 112:2), refers to Isaac because he overcame God in prayer when he prayed for his wife to conceive (Gen. 25:21).[12] Moses' ability in prayer is described by the rabbis as "his strength is great."[13] Some of the prophets were admonished for not standing up in battle with God's anger in the manner of Moses.[14] Curiously enough, with regard to the one occasion when Moses displayed fear of God's wrath (Deut. 9:19), the rabbis aptly apply to this instance the verse, "For the battle is not to the strong" (Kohel. 9:11).[15]

The strength of the prophets to face squarely their Creator in an equal relationship and to enter boldly into a full-dress colloquium with Him is poignantly expressed by the rabbis in an oft-quoted passage of slightly different versions: "Great is the strength of the prophets who compare the likeness of the Power on high to the likeness of man."[16] What the rabbis intimate in this pithy remark is not only that the prophets take the liberty of describing God in anthropomorphic imagery,

---

[12]Mid. Ps. 112:2, but cf. Ag. Ber., chap. 33.

[13]BT Avodah Zarah 8a; cf. Mid. Ps. 90:6.

[14]Ruth R., Petihta, 5.

[15]Deut. R. 9:2; cf. ibid. 11:3; Kohel. R., ad loc.; Ex R. 28:1.

[16]Num R. 19:3; PSRK, parah, p. 36b, and parallels.

but much more that they have the boldness of actually treating God in their dealing with Him in an interpersonal manner of give-and-take, negotiating rather than pleading. This prophetic quality has been taken over also by many of the righteous, concerning whom the rabbis state: "O how strong are the righteous because they know how to overcome their Maker, and they know how to worship."[17] For it indeed requires abundant psychological strength to enter with presence of mind into strenuous dialogues with God; and it cannot be achieved unless, as the rabbis indicate, the prophets behold God in the image of man and treat man as a correlative of God.

Riches. - Also with regard to the qualification of riches, the rabbis themselves indicate its true underlying meaning. They apply the verse, "The poor speak entreatingly, but the rich man speaks roughly" (Prov. 18:23), to man's relationships with God. In one instance it is applied to Joshuah who is characterized as "rich" because he dared to challenge God and call Him to task (Josh. 7:7).[18] Interpreting the verse, "Nor are riches for the intelligent" (Kohel. 9:11), the rabbis state: "In the past he [i.e. Moses] spoke as the rich [i.e. roughly]...but at present, he speaks as the poor 'and

---

[17] Mid. Ps. 19:17; cf. ibid. 5:6.

[18] BT Sanhedrin 44a.

I begged' (Deut. 3:23), a free gift."[19]

It should be amply evident that the term "rich" is merely a figure of speech, akin to the term "strong," depicting a man who is possessed of such a measure of self-assurance as to have the presumptuousness and audacity to admonish God, as it were, to the extent of shifting the blame to Him. The rabbis have expressed the efficacy of such an attitude in a characteristically pithy remark, "Impudence avails even against Heaven."[20]

At this point it may appear that this quality is nothing but another way of describing the previously mentioned quality of strength, but there is indeed a distinct difference between them. Strength denoted the ability to defend oneself against divine wrath, or the courage to face God and make demands upon Him by arguing one's case while always bearing in mind God's ineffable dignity and His authority as the ultimate judge. But the quality of being "rich" denoted the arrogation of the right to become critical of God's behavior, of acting like an aggrieved party to the point of self-righteousness,

---

[19]Deut. R. 9:2; cf. Tan., va-ethanan, 2; Kohel. R. ad loc.; Mid. Tannaim, Hoffmann, p. 14. Though in Deut. R. 2:3 the prophets of Israel are identified as "poor" (i.e. soft spoken), while the non-Jewish prophets are identified as "rich" (i.e. hard spoken), it is only true in contrast rather than in the absolute in which case all prophets must be rough speaking in many an instance.

[20]BT Sanhedrin 105a; cf. PT Ta'anit 2:1, p. 65b. Cf. Ex R. 43:1, where Moses and Daniel are described as having acted brazenly, as it were, towards God.

resorting to daring language charged with self-confidence. In other words, when the prophet assumes the quality of "strength," he will be acting in the manner of a lawyer arguing his case with zeal, conviction and force before the judge who in this case is God. But when the prophet assumes the posture of the "rich," he will be acting not as a lawyer appearing before God, the judge, but he will be acting as a plaintiff treating God as a defendant! This is apparently what the rabbis meant when they asserted that sometimes "their [i.e. the prophets'] prayers is their chiding [of God]," [21] as the prophets seem to address themselves with claims upon God or may even at times find fault with His conduct of human affairs.[22]

Wisdom. - This quality required of the aspirant prophet needs illumination as to its nature, for it is basically open to two possible interpretations. The epithet hakham (wise) is generally applied to the sage who is learned in the law and is adept in the intricacies of its scholarship. However, such a requirement of the prophet does not appear to be the intent

---

[21] Mid. Ps. 90:2.

[22] It should be added that these qualities of "strength" and "riches" apply not only to the prophets relationship vis à vis God, but they hold equally true, if not more so, for the prophet's relationship and dealing with the people. See Micah 3:8 and cf. PSRK, 14, p. 117b, where the quality of the rich's speaking roughly is applied to Isaiah's fierce denunciation of the Jewish people. Cf. Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, part 2, chap. 38.

of the rabbis since we find many instances in the rabbinic dicta wherein it is clearly indicated that the prophet does not necessarily have to be a sage in the strict sense of the word.

Regarding the order of priorities, the rabbis declare: "The sage precedes the king of Israel, the king precedes the high priest, the high priest precedes the prophet..."[23] This scale strikingly proves that the prophet was not required to be a sage, for were it required of him, it would make no sense then to place the sage above the rank of the prophet.[24]

Furthermore, it is stated: "Since the destruction of the Temple, prophecy was taken away from the prophets and given to the sages."[25] Now, if all prophets were first required to be sages, how could then prophecy be taken away from them to be given to the sages? Evidently, not all the prophets were sages as, in fact, Rashi explicitly notes ad loc.: "Prophecy was taken away from those prophets who were not sages." That we find such phrases wherein one is described both as a prophet and as a sage, clearly points to the conclusion that a prophet does not, as a rule, have to be a sage as well. To cite a few such instances: "Jacob and his children were prophets and

---

[23] Tosef. Horayot 2:8; BT Horayot 13a; PT Horayot 3:7, p. 48b; Num. R. 6:1. Cf. Lam. R. 2:7; Mid. Samuel, 4.

[24] See Novellae of R. Samuel Edels to BT Horayot 13a.

[25] BT Baba Batra 12a.

sages."[26] Joseph is described as "a sage and a prophet."[27] Concerning Moses it is said: "If another sage and prophet but Moses were to stand up and say...."[28]

Finally, the woman prophetess is a striking case in point. Not only have the rabbis exempted the woman from the commandment of studying the Law[29], but moreover, they have looked askance at such a practice even when undertaken voluntarily,[30] with the result that a genuine woman sage is not to be found.[31] Yet, the rabbis have not denied the woman the right to be admitted into prophecy almost as an equal with man.[32] This is final proof that the requirement that the prophet be a hakham does not at all refer to him as being a full-fledged sage.

---

[26] Tan., Buber, Mikets, p. 193.

[27] Tan., Buber, va-yeshev, p. 188.

[28] Kohel, R. 3:13. In addition to the above references, cf. BT Nedarim 81a; BT Baba Metzia 85b; Mishnat R. Eliezer, sec. 6; Batei Midrashot, Wertheimer, v. II, p. 279.

[29] BT Kiddushin 29b.

[30] Mishna, Soṭah 3:4, Cf. "It is better for Torah words to be burned than to be handed over to women" (PT Soṭa 3:4, p. 19a).

[31] Even the famous Beruriah, wife of R. Meir, who is reputed to have studied the Law (BT Pesaḥim 62b) and entered into discussion with the sages (Tosef. Kelim, Baba Ḳama, 4:17, Baba Metzia 1:6) never attained the status of a sage. Cf. the remark: "It is not usual for a woman to be found in the house of learning." (BT Mo'ed Ḳaṭan 18a).

[32] See infra, p. 71.

The conclusion is thus forced that we must take the qualification of being wise to have reference to the area of human, practical and wordly wisdom, and not necessarily to Torah scholarship. And we do find many instances where the rabbis apply this term to secular wisdom.[33] Here are several such instances: "If any one tells you that there is wisdom amongst the nations, believe it; that there is Torah amongst the nations, do not believe it!"[34] "A man might say: I have learned wisdom but I have not learned Torah..."[35] "Any one who expresses a wise dictum even amongst the nations is to be called a hakham."[36] Finally, commenting on the verse, "Neither is there bread to the wise" (Kohel. 9:11), the rabbis apply it to Moses and say: "Formerly he served as a 'comes colator' [commissioner of royal receptions] in Pharaoh's palace...but now [it is said about him] 'invite him to have bread' (Ex. 2:20)."[37] Here we have an example of Moses' being termed wise on account of his knowledge in making the proper arrangements for royal receptions.

---

[33] It is noteworthy that R. Yoḥanan makes wisdom a requirement for membership in the Sanhedrin which could hardly refer to the knowledge of the Law since this would be needless to mention. Cf. "Wisdom preceded the Torah"(Mid. Prov. 1:1).

[34] Lam. R. 2:17. [35] Deut. R. 11:5

[36] BT Megillah 16a

[37] Kohel. R. 9:12.

Humility or Stature.- The quality of humility naturally commends itself to us, and hence needs no special treatment.[38] However, in an alternate version of the same passage, listing the qualifications for prophecy, the qualification of humility is dropped and instead quite another qualification is substituted, namely, that the aspirant prophet be a Ba'al Komah (tall of stature.)[39] This calls for analysis, for why is it necessary for the prophet to be of tall stature? It is true that we find the rabbis stating that "The Holy One, blessed be He, takes pride in people of tall stature,"[40] but on the other hand, we also find that the rabbis prefer average height, and tallness is not a desirable quality.[41]

In view of the fact that some of the other qualifications which are listed in this passage are nothing but figures of speech, it will not be farfetched to treat this qualification likewise. Posture is very frequently associated in the rabbinic idiom, as it is in our own modern phraseology, with one's bearing and behavior. An erect posture stands for an attitude of arrogance, while a bent posture is an expression of humility.[42]

---

[38]Cf. BT Pesaḥim 66b. On the surface humility with its submissive bearing seems to run counter to the virtue of strength demanded of the aspirant prophet, a virtue which calls for self-assertion. However, there is room for both these qualities to operate, for at times the prophet stands in need of one, while at another time he will be in need of the other. In this connection it is worth noting that God, whom the prophet as His spokesman should emulate, is described elsewhere by the same. R.Yohanan as being both "strong" [i.e. assertive] and "humble" [i.e. condescending]: "Wherever you find [mentioned in the Bible] God's strength you will also find [mentioned] His humility..." (BT Megillah 31a).

[39]BT Shabbat 92a. [40]BT Berakhot 45b;cf.BT Sanhedrin 105b.

[41]BT Megillah 13a; BT Berakhot 31b; cf. BT Soṭah 26a.

[42]BT Sanhedrin 81a; BT Berakhot 43b; BT Ḳiddushin 31a; BT Shabbat 62b.

Hence, the qualification of a tall posture may simply imply that the prophet should be a proud standard bearer of whatever he may be charged with, and not be self-effacing and submissive.[43]

This may well be a complementary quality of that of "appearance" required for prophecy in a rabbinic comment on the verse, "A man of God came to me whose appearance was like an angel of God, very awe inspiring" (Jud. 13:6), which reads: "From here we derive that the Divine Presence rests only on people of appearance."[44] These two seemingly different qualities, tallness of stature and appearance are essentially one and the same, They are merely different aspects describing a forcefulness of personality.[45]

---

[43]Cf. Yalk. Shim., II, 499. Cf. Mid. Ps. 68:1, where the verse, "When the wicked rise, men hide themselves; but when they perish, the righteous flourish" (Prov. 28:28), is interpreted thus: "When the wicked rule, the righteous do not have an erect posture...Once the wicked perish, the righteous become big." Cf. also Sifra to Lev. 26:9, where the rabbis interpret greatness as having an erect posture; cf. Sifra to Lev. 26:13 where an erect posture stands for fearlessness. It is true that the rabbis consider walking about with an erect posture as sinful (see references above in note 41), but this concerns only such instances where it issues from self-conceit or is applied to wrong purposes. But when it stems from one's trust and confidence in God, and it is displayed only in dealing with the enemies of the divine order, then it is to be considered a virtue.

[44]Num. R. 10:17.

[45]Because they are of different shades, they may be listed sometimes separately, such as in the case of the listing of the qualifications for membership in the Sanhedrin (BT Sanhedrin 17a; BT Menahot 65a). Cf. 1Sam. 16:7. See S. Lieberman, Tosefta Ki-fshuta, Kippurim, p. 727, where these two qualities are used sometimes interchangeably.

In this vein we need to understand a rather quaint rabbinic tradition with regard to the newly anointed king or high priest: "The moment the oil of anointment descended upon him, if he was short, he became tall; if he was dark, he became white".[46] It is not the working of a miracle that the rabbis are reporting, but what they have in mind is that a transformation of the entire appearance and bearing takes place with the assumption of an exalted position.

Work. - A life of idleness, bereft of a practical occupation, devoid of work, even if it all be spent in study is an incomplete life. A person is not considered a worthy candidate for

---

[46] Lev. R. 26, end, p. 612; Tan. , Buber, emor, p. 85; cf. Yalk. Shim., II, 127. The identical effect of becoming transformed is also ascribed to the High Priest following his annointment (Yelamdenu quoted in Yalkut Shim'oni, II, 750). Cf. Targum Jonathan to Isaiah 6:6,7 where the hot coal from the altar with which the angel cleansed the sins of the newly appointed prophet is interpreted to stand for the prophecy which Isaiah was about to receive: "Behold, I have placed my prophecy in your mouth, and your guilt will depart and your sins will be forgiven." Thus, not only is rising to an exalted office cause for a transformation of one's character, but it also brings about an inner change of one's moral and religious being. This is like a new birth, as it gives one a fresh start in life, such as we find in a rabbinic assertion that there are three whose sins are forgiven: he who becomes a proselyte, he who rises to a position of greatness and he who takes a wife (PT Bikkurim 3:3 p. 65c). Cf. comment of rabbis on the verse wherein king David says: "Thou, O Lord, art...my glory and the lifter up of my head" (Ps. 3:4), which reads: "This refers to the oil of anointment." (Pesikta Rabbati, sec. 10, p. 39a). Thus it is by virtue of the anointment for kingship that David felt that he became, as it were, a head taller.

prophecy unless he has engaged in work. Prophecy is not pure contemplation to be gained by a life exclusively dedicated to meditation. In the words of the rabbis: "Work is beloved [by God], as all prophets engaged in it...Moses was a shepherd ... Regarding David it is said, 'And God took him from the sheep folds' (Ps. 78:70)... Regarding Amos it is said, 'For I am a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores' (Amos 7:14).... The Holy Spirit rested on Elisha only out of work...."[47]

Age. - Coming of age is an indispenable prerequisite in the rabbinic law for a variety of purposes. At the age of thirteen a boy becomes duty bound to keep all the commandments.[48] However, insofar as heavenly justice is concerned, one does not attain maturity until he reaches the age of twenty.[49] According to some sages, a priest does not qualify to serve in the Temple before this age of twenty,[50] nor is one qualified to act as a precentor in prayer before this age.[51] According to one opinion, one does not qualify as a judge before the age of eighteen years.[52]

---

[47] Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 366; Mid. Tannaim, Hoffmann, to Deut. 5:14; Bet ha-Midrash, Jellinek, V. III, p. 125; cf. ADRN, II, chap. 21; Mekilta RSBY to Ex. 20:8.

[48] Mishna, Aboth 5:21; BT Niddah 45b.

[49] BT Shabbat 89b; PT Bikkurim 2:1, p. 64c.

[50] BT Ḥullin 24b.

[51] PT Sukkah 3; end p. 54a; Soferim 14:17.

[52] BT Shabbat 56b; cf. Shulhan Arukh, Ḥoshen Mishpat, 7:3.

As for biological and mental maturity, there is the famous Mishnah in Aboth listing all the various ages. "At five years one is ready for the Scriptures.....at fifteen for the Talmud, at eighteen for marriage....at thirty for full strength, at forty for understanding, at fifty for counsel...."[53] There is a division of opinion as to how late one is considered a na'ar (boy). Some hold, until the age of twenty, others say until twenty-five and still others think until thirty years old.[54] However, there seems to be a consensus of opinion that no one attains complete and full understanding before the age of forty, which is considered the age of reason.[55] That is why no student may postpone assuming the obligation of teaching and judging beyond that age, for by this age he is surely able to cope with these problems.[56]

This brings us face to face with the consideration whether there exists, in the rabbinic view, any age requirement for elegibility to the office of prophecy. With the lack of an explicit rabbinic statement on this score, we are forced to guide ourselves by oblique references which betray their point of view. In addition to proof ex silentio, it appears from several such references that the rabbis have not made age a prerequisite for prophecy.

---

[53] Mishna Aboth 5:21

[54] Mid. Prov. 1:4; cf. Yalk. Shim., II, 929; ibid. 167.

[55] Mishna Aboth 5:21; cf. BT Avodah Zarah 5b; Ex. R. 1:35.

[56] BT Soṭah 22b; cf. Tosafot ad loc.

According to many rabbinic tales, certain persons prophesied at a very tender age. Moses is reputed to have prophesied at the age of three months,[57] although according to another version, he was three years old.[58] Miriam is counted among the prophetesses because she predicted before the birth of Moses that he would be the redeemer.[59] Since the age difference between them was no more than six or seven years,[60] then it turns out that Miriam was a prophetess at a very early age. Aaron, too, is credited with prophecy at an early age. When God spoke to Moses in Midian, the rabbis record that Moses in his reply made reference to the fact that Aaron had been prophesying in Egypt for eighty years.[61] Since we know that Aarom was then about eighty-three years old (Ex. 7:7), we may conclude that Aaron started to prophesy at the age of three! Samuel was rather young when he first heard the divine call.[62] Solomon was a mere twelve years old when God first communicated with him in a vision.[63] When Joseph was seventeen years old, he was awaiting a divine revelation.[64]

---

[57]Deut. R. 11:6; Bet ha-Midrash, Jellinek, V. VI, p. 76.

[58]Bet ha-Midrash, Jellinek, Peṭirat Moshe, p. 128.

[59]Mekilta, shirah, 10, p. 151; BT Soṭah 11b.

[60]Seder Olam R., chap. 3; cf. Cantic. R. 2:24.

[61]Tan., shemot, 24, ed. Buber, p. 12.

[62]Tan., tzav, 13; cf. David Kimḥi's comm. to Amos 2:11.

[63]Seder Olam R., chap. 14.

[64]Gen. R. 87:5, p. 1066; ADRN 30; but cf. PRE, chap. 39.

The rabbis commenting on the words of Jeremiah, "I cannot speak, for I am only a youth" (Jer. 1:6), add: "The Holy Spirit said 'but I love a youth because he has not savored the taste of sin'."[65] This clearly indicates that Jeremiah must have been very young not to have had as yet the opportunity to experience sin. All in all, not only is youthfulness not considered a hindrance, but on the contrary, it may be considered an advantage of sorts. In fact, there are some indications that the prophetic faculty weakens with the onset of old age. Commenting on the verse, "And Israel's eyes were dim with age so he could not see" (Gen. 48:10), it is stated: "He could not see by the Holy Spirit."[66]

Finally, there is an interesting comment of the rabbis which indicates that age is of no particular significance in qualifying for prophecy. It reads: "Since Moses was eighty years old [when God called on him to prophesy] and he was the son of Amram [who was a person of importance], one might think that all prophets need be so. But the verse says: 'a prophet,' that means in any case!"[67]

---

[65] Pesikta R. 26:1, p. 129a; Yalk. Shim., II, 262; cf. BT Erubin 21b.

[66] Gen. R. 97:2, p. 1243; cf. Pesikta R. 3:4, p. 12a.

[67] Sifre, Deut., 83; cf. Pardo's commentary ad loc., but cf. Maimonides, Guide..., part 2, chap. 45, that except for Moses "the rest of the prophets must cease to prophesy a shorter or longer period before their death"; and cf. Ibn Ezra to Ex. 7:7 where this view of Maimonides is adopted. David Kimhi to Joel 3:1 also assumes youth to be in a more

At this juncture an explanation is in order as to why there is an age requirement for all other purposes, as brought out at the outset of this discussion, but not for prophecy. The answer may be found in a case recorded in the Talmud concerning marriage. The question is posed as to whether a minor who gives the physical appearance of an adult is eligible to enter into a marriage contract. The given answer is that he is ineligible only because we have not attained the wisdom to ascertain if this minor is really mature or if he merely presents a false impression of maturity.[68] We thus see that maturity as such is not altogether dependent on a particular age, and that some persons mature earlier than others. Hence legal age requirements are the result of human fallibility in evaluating true maturity. Since prophecy is to a large extent the prerogative of God, then maturity is not to be judged by our standard "rule of thumb," but is to be decided by divine knowledge in accordance with the real index of maturity necessary for each kind of prophetic mission.[69]

---

advantageous position for prophecy. See Francis Bacon, "Of Youth and Age", No. 42, where he apparently alludes to this comment by Kimḥi. However, both Ibn Ezra and Kimḥi seem to contradict themselves by their comment on Amos 2:11. The view expressed by Maimonides is probably what the rabbis had in mind in their comment on the verse, "And He said Moses Moses..." (Ex. 3:4). They observe that wherever a name is repeated, it is separated in the Masoretic text by a Pasek (i.e. a vertical dividing line) except for this instance, which gave rise to their comment: "With other prophets God ceased to speak, but He never ceased to speak with Moses" (Ex. R. 2:6).

[68] BT Giṭṭin 89b, according to the correct reading of R. Hananel cited in Ashri ad loc.; cf. BT Ḥagigah 13a where a youngster was wise enough to know the mysteries of the Merkabah.

[69] On the whole matter of the arbitrariness of standards and measures in the rabbinic view, see M. Silberg, Kakh Darko shel Talmud (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 45-59.

Sufficient-but-not-necessary qualities. - There are several qualities, each of which is of such signal importance, that on its account alone, a person may be deemed a worthy subject for the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. In the case of one quality, prophecy may follow by right as a natural consequence, while in the case of another quality, it will come only as a special reward from God as part of the providential system.[70]

Hasidut (piety). - This quality ranks supreme in the order of all religious accomplishments, and hence it will lead to the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.[71] What is the meaning of Hasidut, according to the rabbinic view, is an extensive study in itself. However, leaving out all the details, Hasidut is essentially composed of two fundamental virtues. First and foremost, it demands that its adherents go beyond the strict requirements of the Law, both in acts of omission and in acts of commission.[72] So much for matters regarding performance. Insofar as outlook is concerned, suffice it to say that it demands from its adherents equanimity and indifference to all abuse and mockery on the part of the outside world.[73]

---

[70] Cf. H. A. Fischel, "Martyr and Prophet," JQR, XXXVII (1947), 371.

[71] Mishna Soṭah end; PT Sheḳalim 3:end p.47c; Bet ha-Midrash, Jellinek, V. VI, p.118.

[72] Mishna Aboth 5:10; BT Shabbat 120a; BT Menaḥot 41a; cf. Sefer Hasidim, No. 987.

[73] Mid. Ps. 16:11; 86:1; 104:14; Yalḳ. Shim., II, 669; cf. BT Gittin 36b; Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 74. Cf. A. Buechler, Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety (London, 1922), pp. 55, 257-264.

Fear of Sin. - Fear of sin itself rather than fear of punishment for sinning, is of such importance that it renders a man worthy of attaining the Holy Spirit.[74] According to this rabbinic version, Hasidut is of even greater moment, as it infuses its followers with the power of reviving the dead, which is a step above the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.[75]

The faithful observance of a commandment. - "Whosoever performs one mitzvah in faith...is worthy for the Holy Spirit to rest upon him."[76] On the surface this seems to be a small order for such a lofty goal, but we must not underestimate the qualifying proviso that it be performed with complete faith. For it requires the subject's complete devotion and self-identification with the mitzvah, in order that he abide by it at all costs and under all circumstances.[77]

Faith. - The possession of absolute and unswerving faith in God and in His dealings with mankind is of such conspicuous merit that its appropriately peculiar reward is the bestowal of the

---

[74]BT Avodah Zarah 20b; PT Shabbat 1:5, p. 3c; Cantic. R. 1:9 and cf. BT Shabbat 31b.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Mekilta de RSBY to Ex 14:31, p. 70; cf. Mekilta, ad loc.; Seder Eliahu R., chap. 10, p. 48, where it is reported that Deborah attained prophecy as a reward for her devoted performance in making especially good wicks for the lamp in the sanctuary.

[77]Maimonides, Comm. to Mishna, Makkot, end; Sefer Hasidim, ed. Wistinetzki, 1950; cf. BT Shabbat 63a; Mid. Ps. 6:1, and editor's note thereto.

Holy Spirit. In the words of the rabbis: "So great is faith before God that as a reward for faith, the Holy Spirit rested upon them [i.e. the Jews] and they uttered a [prophetic] song."[78]

Helping others at the risk of one's life or fortune. - The rabbis, identifying the prophet Obadiah with Obadiah, the major domo of Ahab, inquire: "Wherefore has Obadiah merited prophecy?" To which they offer the answer: "Because he hid one hundred prophets in a cave [risking his life at the hands of Jezebel]."[79] That endagering one's life or fortune may be rewarded by the bestowal of the prophetic spirit is poignantly illustrated by the rabbinic remark with regard to the seventy elders, who were appointed in the Desert of Sinai, and upon whom the Holy Spirit descended.(Num. 11:24, 25). The rabbis, identifying these elders with the Israelitish foremen who were beaten by Pharaoh in Egypt when the Israelites failed to fill the daily quota of bricks (Ex. 5:14), remark: "Because they surrendered themselves for the sake of Israel, and sustained beatings in order to ease the work for them, therefore they merited [the gift of] the Holy Spirit, and to be appointed prophets over them."[80]

---

[78]Mekilta de RSBY to Ex 14:31; Mekilta and Tanḥuma, ad loc.

[79]BT Sanhedrin 39b; cf. Ex. R. 31:3.

[80]Ex. R. 5:23; cf. Num. R. 15:16; Sifre, Num., 95.

In this class may also be placed the rabbinic observation that because of Abraham's devotion to his fellow creatures and his struggle to save them from perdition, God spoke to him.[81]

Feeding the wayfarer. - Probably under the influence of the case of Abraham, who is portrayed in the rabbinic annals as the patron, par excellence, of all wayfarers, the rabbis were led to consider this occupation to be of especially meritorious character.[82] It therefore is not surprising to find the rabbis going to the extent of rationalizing the reception of a prophetic revelation by the false prophet of Bethel (I Kings 13: 20-22) as a reward for his habit of giving food to wayfarers.[83] Lot, too, is credited with prophecy as a reward for his looking after the needs of the wayfarer.[84]

What is most amazing is that if for some reason such a person is totally incapable of experiencing prophetic revelation, then the reward of prophecy may be transferred to his wife if she is capable. Such was the case of the prophetess Huldah who, according to one rabbinic tradition was granted prophecy because of the merit of her husband,

---

[81]Gen. R. 49:9, P. 511; Lev. R. 10:1 p. 197. By extension we may include in this category, Job's friends who attained prophecy in consequence of their sacrifice of having left the comfort of their homes and travelled far to visit Job in order to ease his burden (Kohel. R. 7:8; cf. Tan., Buber, va-yiggash, 23, p. 175).

[82]Cf. Ex. R. 4:2; Cant. R. 2:16.

[83]PT Sanhedrin 11:7, p. 30c; BT Sanhedrin 103b, 104a; Cant. R. 2:16; Seder Eliahu R., chap. 13, p. 60; cf. I. Heinemann, Darkei ha-Aggadah, p. 29.

[84]Aleph Beth of Ben Sira, Steinschneider, chap. 7.

Shallum ben Tikvah. "Shallum ben Tikvah...used to fill a skinbag with water and he would sit at the gate of the town. He would offer a drink to everyone who came from the road. ...In merit of the charity he did, the Holy Spirit rested on his wife [i.e. Ḥuldah]."[85]

The studying and teaching of the Law. - Although it is said concerning the studying of the Law that it "outweighs them all,"[86] yet not everyone of the countless number of students and teachers of the Law was deemed deserving of the Holy Spirit. Only certain types merited and received such a reward.

A student who fully gave himself over to the task of delving and searching for the hidden and unknown truths contained in the Law is a deserving candidate for prophecy. Solomon is one such example. The rabbis describe him as a scout who ventures out to unknown territories to obtain knowledge. About him God said, "You have searched out the words of the Torah..., behold, I am causing the Holy Spirit to rest upon you."[87]

Another type of student, one who studies the Law with the avowed purpose of carrying into action all that he is learning, is also entitled to attain prophecy as a due reward. Joshuah is cited by the rabbis as proof of such a case.[88]

---

[85]PRE, chap. 33; but cf. Yalk. Shim., II, 233, where it is reported that the Holy Spirit rested upon him.

[86]Mishna Pe'ah 1:1. [87]Cant. R. 1:7.

[88]Lev. R. 35:7 p. 826; Tan. ekev 6.

As an example of a teacher who merits prophecy, one rabbinic tradition takes Solomon, as characterized by his pseudonym Koheleth. The rabbis learn from the verse, "And besides that Koheleth was wise, he also taught the people knowledge and he pondered and sought out and arranged many proverbs" (Kohel. 12:9), that Solomon was responsible for making the Torah understandable and accessible to all. Until Solomon came and devised ways and means of explaining the Torah, and personally employed them in his public instruction, the Torah was incomprehensible.[89]

Serving the prophet. - In the rabbinic scale of values, attending and serving a great man is of far greater benefit than mere studying. The rabbis deduce it from the fact that Elishah is described not as one who studied under Elijah, but as one "who poured water on the hands of Elijah" (1Kings 3:11).[90] Joshua merited prophecy for his service to Moses.[91] There is one rabbinic version which reports: "Joshua was not a student of the Law, and the Israelites called him an ignoramus, but because he used to attend Moses, he gained his heritage."[92]

---

[89]Cant. R. 1:8. [90]BT Berakhot 7b.

[91]Num R. 2:11.

[92]Yelamdenu quoted in Yalk. Shim., II, 959; cf. Batei Midrashot, Wertheimer, V. II, p. 348, where Joshua is said "to have made himself as a fool with regard to Moses his teacher."

Serving a prophet indeed acts as a kind of apprentice-ship in which one learns by close observation of his master's ways, and which makes it possible for the disciple to learn the innermost thoughts of the master which come out incidentally through the intimate contacts of disciple and master. Apart from these educational considerations, it has the superadded value of a mystic infusion of the master's spirit, with the disciple absorbing his master's fragrance. In addition, it also acts by way of due reward for services rendered. Because of all these considerations, the services called for include some of the most menial in nature. Joshua is described as occupying himself with arranging the chairs and spreading out the mats.[93] For there is no telling which contact will provide the greater benefit which issues from the symbiotic relationship of disciple and master!

Death. - In a class by itself stands the time quality of the last moments in a person's life. At this time, when man's corporeal senses are in the process of withering away, the rabbis assure us that man's spirit will be able to behold the revelation of the Divine. It is derived from the verse, "For man shall not see Me and live" (Ex. 33:20), which the rabbis seem to take as, "for man shall not see Me while alive," and thus they logically conclude: "They cannot see while alive

---

[93] Num. R. 21:15; Yalk. Shim., I, 577; ibid., 2, 559; Batei Midrashot, Wertheimer, V. I, p. 234.

but they do see at their death."[94] In fact, Moses' request, "Show me Thy glory" (Ex. 33:18), went unfulfilled until close to his death: "When did He show him? Close to death! From here you may learn that close to death one sees."[95]

Whether this privilege is granted universally to all people or is reserved solely for the righteous, on this the rabbis are divided in their view. In some sources it is always stressed that it belongs to the righteous.[96] There seems to be a rather piquant reason for it.

> Adam said...I do not care that the wicked are to die, but I do care that the righteous are to die because they will blame me, so please do not record that I brought death upon them. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, so I shall do. When a man will be about to depart from the world, the Holy One, blessed be He, will reveal Himself to him and will say to him...that you are dying for your deeds which you have done...."[97]

On this basis it can be seen why it is necessary for God to reveal Himself only to the righteous. However, whether this is the correct reason or not for excluding the wicked, there is good and sufficient reason to do so simply for lack of merit alone.

But there is also a rabbinic view to the contrary which asserts: "Both the righteous and the wicked receive the

---

[94]Sifra to Lev. 2:12; Sifre, Num., 103, p. 101; Mid. Ps. 103:3.

[95]Sifre, Deut., 357.

[96]PT Avodah Zarah 3:1, p. 42c.

[97]Tan., Buber, Bereshit, 29, p. 21; cf. Num R. 19:10.

Divine Presence at the time of their death."[98] The rabbis offer a rather down-to-earth reason for such an unusual experience granted to the wicked.

> "...the wicked who rebelled are shown at death the Divine Presence and they are told: 'See the face of the King against whom you rebelled'.... And also the righteous are shown the face of the Divine Presence and they are told: 'See the face of the King whom you served'."[99]

However, whatever be the final disposition of this controversy, there is no arguing that the revealed information which, according to the rabbis, God at times imparts to the morituri is certainly not given to the wicked. All that the wicked will have at the hour of death will be a vision of the Divine, but they will not receive any arcane information. But the righteous morituri will have the opportunity to experience some form of prophetic knowledge of things unknown in addition to beholding a vision of the Divine. That the wicked do not share in this privilege can be seen ex silentio, since all the rabbinic accounts of such revelations by the morituri are never attributed to a wicked individual.[100]

In conclusion, it needs to be underscored that revelations imparted to the righteous morituri do not turn their

---

[98]Mid. Ps. 22:32; Semaḥot de R. Ḥiyyah 4:2; cf. Sifra to Lev. 2:12 amd Sifre, Num., 103, p. 101; Yalk. Shim., I, 701.

[99]Mid. Ps. 22:32.

[100]Cf. sources cited by H.A.Fischel, "Martyr and Prophet," JQR, XXXVII (1947), 364-366.

recipients into prophets even though these disclosures may have a prophetic quality, for there is much more to being a prophet than merely having knowledge of the unknown, as we shall have occasion to develop further on.[101] Also, it is not clear from the sources whether this so-called prophesying on the part of the morituri is of a conscious nature. It seems more likely that it is done without full consciousness, and for this reason alone they cannot be classed as prophets whose prophesying is carried out with full awareness of what they are saying and doing.

---

[101] Infra. p. 262. H. A. Fischel, loc. cit., p. 364 missed this point.

CHAPTER IV

IMPEDIMENTS AND HINDRANCES

Sinfulness and repentance. - That a sinful or wicked person is an unworthy and utterly unfit vehicle for prophecy is axiomatic.[1] The mere association with the wicked may sometimes be the cause for prophecy to depart from the prophet.[2] It is therefore small wonder that the prophets are automatically given the epithet of "righteous,"[3] and the term "righteous" is often treated in the course of rabbinic exegesis as an equivalent of prophets.[4] Furthermore, not only is it unthink-

---

[1]BT Sanhedrin 105a; cf. BT Berakhot 18b; BT Shabbat 56a; BT Yoma 39a; Cant. R. 1:35.

[2]BT Megillah 15b; Tan., va-yetze, 10; Pesiḳ. R., 3, p. 10a; Gen. R. 65:4, p. 715. That we find rabbinic dicta which assert that the Divine Presence dwells amongst the Jews even when they are bad (BT Yoma 56b; Num. R. 7:9; Cant. R. 6:11; and freq.) has no reference to the Holy Spirit of prophecy. These various statements refer to the protective Presence and to the manifest workings of Providence which remain with the Jewish people in whatever state it may find itself.

It is true that we find the rabbis equating the non-Jewish prophet with the wicked (Lev. R. 1:13, p. 29; Num. R. 20:1, and parallels), but this is only in contrast to the Jewish prophets. Balaam, however, is treated in certain rabbinic sources as a unique exception to this rule (Num. R. 20:15, and parallels). There is one rabbinic tradition which solves this problem by having an angel do the speaking for Balaam (Num. R. 20:16).

[3]Lev. R. 27:4, p. 630, and note variants; PSRK, sec. 9, p. 76a; cf. BT Shabbat 56a; cf. Mid. Ps. 1:4; 58:2, and ed. note; cf. Soferim 13:9; Kallah chap. 10; Tan., va-yishlaḥ, 2; BT Ḥagigah 4b.

[4]Lev. R. 1:13 p. 29; Gen. R. 52:5 p. 546; cf. BT Berakhot 10a; PT Sanhedrin 11:7 p. 30c; Mekilta to Ex. 14:24; Ex. R. 31:17;

able for the wicked person to attain prophecy, but even his mere repetition and proclamation of God's words is detestable: "God does not want the praises of a wicked man...as it is said, 'But to the wicked God says: what right hast thou to recount my statutes' (Ps. 50:16)."[5]

However, it is not to be concluded on the basis of what has been said thus far that all prophets are untainted by sin and are entirely guiltless. On the contrary, the prophets as a class are reputed to have had their share of sin of which they were not fully acquitted. This is made painfully clear in a highly dramatic rabbinic legend which reads, in part, as follows:

> When Israel stood before Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: 'Bring me good sureties that you will keep it...' They then said: 'Sovereign of the Universe, our prophets will be our sureties.' He replied: 'I have fault to find with them,' as it says, 'And the shepherds transgressed against Me' (Jer. 2:8), and it is also written, 'Thy prophets have been like foxes in the ruins' (Ez. 13:4)... [6]

Neither have certain individual prophets escaped sin nor were they entirely absolved from it.[7] Their words and deeds were

---

Kohel. R. 1:30; Kallah R., chap. 6. Cf. H. A. Fischel, "Martyr and Prophet," JQR, XXXVII (1947), 372, who avers: "Prophet and righteous are identical in rabbinic religion."

[5]Lev. R. 16:4, p. 355; cf. Mid. Ps. 149:5; Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 275.

[6]Cant. R. 1:24; cf. Tosef., Soṭa 4:15; Ruth R., Petiḥta, 5; Num. R. 9:17; cf. H. A. Fischel, loc. cit., p. 371, 372; cf. Pesik. R., 28, p. 133a.

[7]The rabbis understand the verse: '...the prophet also shall stumble with thee by night' (Hos. 4:5), to have reference to the sinning of the true prophet(BT Mo'ed Kaṭan 17a; BT Menaḥot 99b; cf. Maimonides, Eight Chapters, chap. 7; but cf. Targ. J. to Hos. 4:5).

carefully weighed, and in many instances found wanting.[8]

Yet, despite the various sins ascribed to many prophets, their over-all standing as righteous men was not at all impaired. A man's claim to righteousness is not determined by absolute and unconditional standards. In rabbinic theology, it is determined by the fundamental posture and image a man presents, and not by what is incidental to him; by what he identifies himself with and is identified with, and not by what is out of character and alien to him.[9]

However, exception is made in the case of a grievous sin. Even if it be but a single sin and completely out of character, the enormity and gravity of it will cause the Holy Spirit to depart from the prophet. Such was the case of David, who was deprived of the Holy Spirit for six months,[10] or according to a different rabbinic tradition, for a full twenty-two years,[11] following his disgraceful behavior in the Bathsheba affair.

---

[8]For the sins of patriarchs, see Cant. R. 1:24,; for those of Moses - Tan., va-ethanan, 6; ed. Buber, p. 6; for those of Elisha - BT Soṭa 47a; BT Sanhedrin 107a. Jonah was guilty of withholding a prophecy (BT Sanhedrin 89b). Ahiya erred (BT Sanhedrin 102a).

[9]The individual is judged by the majority of his deeds (BT Kiddushin 40b). This is what the rabbis had in their mind in their assertion: "...neither were the Israelites of that generation fit to commit that sin" (BT Avodah Zarah 4b).

[10]BT Yoma 22b; BT Sanhedrin 107a; cf. Targ. to Ps. 51:14.

[11]Seder Eliahu R., chap. 2, p. 7; Yalk. Shim., II, 23.

But no matter how much an individual may be weighed down by sin, he can be reclaimed by repentance. The dynamics of repentance is so effective that it is able to transform a thoroughly wicked man into a righteous individual, the moment he resolves to repent. The Aggadah is replete with innumerable utterances and examples to this effect.[12] But what is more striking is the fact that this view holds equally true in the rigors of the Halakha. If a man contracts marriage on the representation that he is a righteous man, the marriage is valid, even though he is known to be completely wicked, because he may have thought of repenting at that moment.[13]

In consequence, a repentant sinner may become eligible for prophecy and his past record of sin will in no way act as a hindrance. Even a false prophet who prophesied that the people should worship idols may become a true prophet once he truly repents.[14] Joel, the son of Samuel, was a sin-

---

[12]Concerning such cases, the rabbis remark: "There is one who gains this eternal reward in one moment." (BT Avodah Zarah 10b; 17a). The rabbis have gone as far as to assure one who repents out of love that his past wilful sins will be regarded as merits (BT Yoma 86b).

[13]BT Kiddushin 49b.

[14]Sifre, Deut., 84, p. 150; Yalk. Shim., I, 885, and Zait Ra'anan, ad loc.; cf. Num. R. 20:16; and cf. case of Balaam in Num. R. 20:7; but cf. BT Sanhedrin 106a.

ner but he repented and subsequently he became, according to the rabbis, the prophet Joel.[15] Similarly, the sons of Ḳoraḥ, who were associated in sin with their father, became prophets after they repented.[16] Such was also the case with Eliphaz. He was originally a sinner but he repented; later he became a prophet.[17] It is thus safe to conclude that repentance as a form of regeneration is as applicable to prophecy as it is to all other intents and purposes.

Physical Defects. - With regard to the priesthood, any priest with a physical defect is disqualified from serving in the Temple.[18] The high priest is supposed to outdo all other priests in beauty and appearance.[19] Similarly, good appearance is a requirement for membership in the Sanhedrin and a physical defect renders one ineligible.[20]

---

[15]Num. R. 10:14; Ruth R. 4:5; Mid. Ps. 80:1.

[16]Mid. Ps. 45:5.

[17]Bereshit Rabbati, Albeck, p. 160; cf. Tan., Buber, va-yera, 38, p. 108; va-yishlah, 8, p. 167.

[18]Lev. 21:17-23; BT Hullin 24a.

[19]Tosef., Yoma 1:6, Lieberman, p. 222; BT Hoaryot 9a.

[20]BT Yebamot 101a; BT Sanhedrin 36b.

This brings us to the consideration of whether such a disqualification exists with regard to prophetism. It is true that we find several instances of prophets with physical defects. Elisha was bald (2 Kings 2:23), a defect sufficient to disqualify a priest from serving in the Temple.[21] Jonah, too, was bald. He lost all of his hair because of the intense heat inside the whale.[22] Balaam was lame in one leg and blind in one eye.[23] Aḥiyah became blind.[24] Moses was afflicted with a speech difficulty.[25] Amos was such a bad stammerer that the Jews poked fun at him and queried: "Could not God find in the entire world a man but this stammerer upon whom to cause His Presence to dwell?[26]

However, regardless of the conclusion that suggests itself by these isolated and inconclusive instances that physical deficiencies and shortcomings may not act as a total

---

[21]Mishna Bekhorot 7:2, unless we shall limit his baldness to such small dimensions which are not deemed defective (see ibid.). However, if such was the case, there would have been no cause for Elisha to become the object of derision.

[22]Tan., Toledot, 12.

[23]BT Sanhedrin 105a.

[24]1Kings 14:4; PSRK, p. 23a, and parallels. In this connection note should be taken of the opinion that the blind are exempt from the performance of all commandments (BT Baba Ḳama 87a).

[25]Ex. 4:10. There is one rabbinic assertion that Moses was ultimately cured from this defect. (Deut. R. 1:1, ed. Lieberman, 7; Yalḳ, Shim., I, 793).

[26]Lev. R. 10:2, p. 198; Kohel. R. 1:2.

disqualification from prophecy,[27] it is nevertheless indicated that they will act to lessen the likelihood of the attainment of prophecy. In connection with the revelation on Mt. Sinai, which in a sense is the prototype of all revelation to come, the rabbis state: "When the Israelites came out of Egypt, there were amongst them defective people...The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'It is not right to give the Torah to defective people ...' He beckoned to the ministering angels and they descended and cured them"[28] In analyzing certain physical features attributed to Moses, the rabbis raise the objection, "you thus make Moses into a defective person!"[29] This tends to show that a defective person is not a likely vehicle for prophecy.

---

[27]J. Abelson, without sufficient justification, seizes upon the rabbinic dictum that the Holy Spirit does not rest upon a man who is in a state of sorrow to generalize and to conclude from it that "in the opinion of the Rabbis every physical imperfection or derangement of the organism...acted as a bar to accession of the Holy Spirit" (Op. Cit., pp. 268-269). He is turning matters upside down by treating sorrow "as a bodily imperfection," and that is why the grief-stricken cannot attain the Holy Spirit (ibid., p. 269). This is wholly inadmissible as one cannot interchange physical and emotional impairment without violating the spiritual conception of prophecy. While it is understandable that a melancholic state renders the prophet incapable and unworthy of prophecy, the same cannot be said for a physical defect which may not affect at all the emotional well-being of the prophet. In all likelihood, he must have been influenced by Maimonides, who apparently makes bodily soundness a prerequisite for prophecy (Mishne Torah, Yesodei ha-Torah 7:1).

[28]Tan., yitro, 8; cf. Num. R. 7:1.

[29]BT Bekhorot 44a; BT Soṭa 12b.

Uncircumcision. - Whatever may be said of physical blemishes in general, the rabbis are quite clear in considering uncircumcision a blemish of such a singular kind as to serve as a barrier to the attainment of prophecy. On the other hand, to be born with the absence of a foreskin is considered a mark of perfection which many of the prophets are credited with.[30] When a new-born infant is described in the Bible by the adjective "good," it is interpreted by the rabbis to indicate either that this infant "was born circumcised" or that "he is fit for prophecy."[31] Thus, there is apparently a definite link between the two. That uncircumcision constitutes a barrier is expressly stated by the rabbis: "Is it possible that the Israelites who were not circumcised should hear God's voice on Mt. Sinai?...Far be it, they surely were circumcised!"[32]

This disqualification, however, applies only to the Jew, but in the non-Jew, who is under no obligation to circumcise, it cannot be considered a blemish, and therefore it is no barrier to his attaining prophecy.[33] In this connection it is interesting to note that Abraham's prophetic experiences before he became circumcised were incomplete insofar as he

---

[30] ADRN, chap. 2.

[31] BT Soṭa 12a.

[32] PRE, chap. 29; cf. Num. R. 12:10.

[33] Of the seven Gentile prophets, only two prophets Balaam and Job, are reputed, in some rabbinic sources, to have been born without a foreskin. (ADRN, chap. 2). However, other rabbinic sources consider even these two to have been born uncircumcised (Gen. R. 80:4, p. 954; cf. Num. R. 12:10).

could not receive the divine revelation in an upright position nor could he gaze at the Presence.[34] His case is, however, different from the non-Jew. While with regard to the non-Jew, who is fully exempt from this commandment, uncircumcision may not be considered even as a minimizing factor in the extent of his prophetic experience, in the unique case of Abraham it was considered as a limiting factor. Because Abraham was due to receive this commandment in the future, he was considered in the meantime slightly defective in potentiality, enough to curtail his full prophetic experience.

Natality and ancestry. - The rabbis were not loath to disclose the humble antecedents of some of the prophets. Such prominent prophets as Jeremiah and Ezekiel and six others are reputed to have been the descendants of Rahab the harlot,[35] and Uriah of Kiriat Ye'arim was of Gibeonite descent.[36] Neither was prophecy the prerogative of any particular tribe[37] as was priesthood, which was the exclusive domain of the tribe of Levi,[38] or as kingship, which was the preferred right of the tribe of Judah,[39] or as the mastery of the Torah, which was the traditional heritage of the tribes of Levi and Issachar.[40]

---

[34] Tan., lekh lekha, 20; cf. Num. R. 12:10.

[35] BT Megillah 14b; Yalk. Shim., II, 256,257; cf. Ruth R. 2:1; Midrash ha-Gadol, Gen., p. 371; Batei Midrashot, Wertheimer, v. II, p. 148.

[36] PSRK, 13, p. 115b.

[37] Tosef., Sukkah 1:9, Lieberman, p. 258.

[38] Cf. Num. 17:16-26; Deut. 33:8-11.

[39] Gen. 49:10; Gen. R. 98:5, p. 1219; Targ. J. To Gen. 49:3.

[40] BT Yoma 26a; cf. P. Targ. to Gen. 49:7.

However, the above considerations notwithstanding, the rabbis were clear in their assertion that the Divine Presence rests only on families of legitimate or pure birth, depending on our translation of the Hebrew term meyuhasot.[41] In any case, this definitely excludes from prophecy the Mamzer (bastard), or for that matter, any offspring of a prohibited union, and the offspring of such parents who are forbidden to marry into "God's community."[42] By extension, the proselyte, too, should be excluded as he is not of "pure birth."[43] But it is questionable if we are on safe ground to do so on the strength of this unspecified formulation alone.

The question of the proselyte's eligibility also hinges on the particular meaning that is to be given to the Hebrew term aherim in the rabbinic comment on the verse: "The Lord Your God will raise up a prophet from thy midst, of thy brethren" (Deut. 18:15). From the phrase "of thy brethren" the rabbis infer: "But not of Aherim (strangers)."[44] By virtue of this term it is possible to exclude both non-Jew and proselyte

---

[41] BT Ḳiddushin 70b; BT Sanhedrin 36b; cf. PT Horayot 1:4, p. 46a; Num. R. 9:4; Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 184; Pseud. Rashi to BT Ta'anit 4a.

[42] For the meaning of this term, see Deut. 23:1-8.

[43] See Yehuda ha-Levi, Kuzari, part 1, 27,115; cf. J. Gutman, "The Philosophy of Judaism" (Heb.), 1951, p. 120. See Rashi to BT Sanhedrin 39b.

[44] Sifre, ad loc.; cf. M. S. Kahan, Meshekh Ḥokhmah, ad loc. Cf. Yehuda ha-Levi (Kuzari, part 1, 115) who, as a result of his general view on prophecy, denies prophecy to the proselyte.

alike, or it may refer to the non-Jew alone.[45]

The proselyte's eligibility to prophecy is also bound up with yet another consideration, namely, the nature of the authority of the prophetic office.[46] If the prophet's office carries with it the badge of dominion or some jurisdictional sway, the proselyte is then ineligible since he is barred from holding any position of power, whether of national or local character. The rabbis categorically affirm that any office holder exercising authority, be he king or mere policeman, judge or court clerk, or even charity collector, must be "from the choicest of thy brethren," which excludes the proselyte.[47]

---

[45] There is an identically worded comment by the rabbis (Sifre to Deut. 17:15) with regard to the appointment of a king, in which case it appears that the phrase "but not of aherim" excludes the non-Jew and the proselyte alike. However, elsewhere the rabbis disqualify the proselyte from kingship by virtue of the verse, "from the midst of thy brethren" (ibid.), which the rabbis render as "from the choicest of thy brethren" thereby excluding the proselyte because he is not of the choicest. (BT Baba Ḳama 88a; PT Ḳiddûshin 4:5, p. 66a; Num. R. 9:4; cf. PT Horayot 1:4, p. 46a; BT Yebamot 45b, 102a).

Maimonides, true to his naturalistic view of prophecy, interprets this rabbinic passage in quite a forced manner, that it does not come to exclude the non-Jew from prophecy, but that it is merely a reassurance to the Jew that he will not be in need of non-Jewish prophets since he will have a sufficient number of his own. (Iggeret Teiman, ed. Halkin p. 48; cf. his Mishne Torah, yesodei ha-Torah 9:1). However, not only is he alone in this interpretation, but it is refuted by the similar comment made by the rabbis regarding the chosing of a king, wherein it is clear from the many rabbinic sources cited above that it is a disqualifying remark rather than a reassurance to the Jew that he will have his own native talent so that he will have no need to look to the Gentile nations.

[46] See infra, pp. 220-29.

[47] BT Yebamot 45b, 102a; PT Ḳiddushin 4:5, p. 66a; Num. R. 9:4. It would be unreasonable to limit the effect of this rule only to such offices which are hereditary, thus excluding prophecy which is not subject to hereditary rights.

That the prophet is chosen for his office by God does not appear to have any bearing in this connection.[48] This can be vividly seen from the case of the king who is also chosen at first by God and, yet, he is no exception to the ruling which bars the proselyte. That the king is at first chosen by God, is clearly stated in the verse, "Surely thou shalt set over thee a king whom the Lord thy God shall choose" (Deut. 17:15), from which the rabbis conclude that the king is picked by the prophet who makes known the will of God.[49]

However, assuming that the prophetic office is primarily spiritual and is devoid of any ruling authoritativeness, being of an impersonal nature, it should not fall within the category of this ruling. Hence, the proselyte could not be excluded on this count. This assumption finds corroboration in the existence of prophetesses despite the fact that women, too, are disqualified from holding office. Admittedly, an argument could be made to distinguish between the two, inasmuch as the disqualification of the woman from holding office is derived by mere implication from the use of the masculine term "king," whereas the proselyte is more explicitly excluded by the phrase "from the midst of thy brethren," which stands for, "from the choicest of thy brethren." But such a distinction is of no

---

[48] Tosafot to BT Niddah 50a allow for such an exemption with regard to a woman judge. However, in other parallel passages in the Tosafot, this view is omitted.

[49] Sifre, Deut., 157, p. 208.

significance because the net result is the same since they are both disqualified from holding an office of power.

An actual case in point is the one of the prophet Obadiah, who was a proselyte according to a rabbinic tradition.[50] This should apparently prove a proselyte to be eligible to prophecy, but there are certain factors to consider in this case which vitiate this proof.

Obadiah is a singular exception from our last reason for disqualification, since his prophecy concerned itself solely with Edom and was not at all directed to Israel, so that he was really exercising no authority in Israel. His case is thus comparable to a proselyte's acting as judge or exercising authority over a fellow proselyte, which is acceptable to the rabbis.[51] As far as the first consideration of the Divine Presence resting only on individuals of "pure birth"is concerned, allowance should be made for exceptional merit to override it, and Obadiah possessed supreme merits, as the rabbis take pains to explain.[52] Finally, it is not fully clear whether the rabbis meant that Obadiah himself was a proselyte, or perhaps they meant that one of his ancestors was a proselyte, which would then take him out of the purview of this analysis.

---

[50] BT Sanhedrin 39b; Tan., Buber, tazria' 10; cf. Ag. Beresh., chap. 14.

[51] BT Yebamot 102a, and parallels.

[52] BT Sanhedrin 39b, and cf. Rashi, ad loc.

Conclusion. - With the lack of an explicit statement on the part of the rabbis, and with the ambiguity of the meaning of the terms "aḥerim" and "pure birth," it is difficult to establish with certainty whether the proselyte is disqualified or not. However, judging from the general rabbinic outlook which makes prophecy ultimately the exclusive domain of Israel, as we shall see later on, and the frequent rabbinic listing of the prophet together with the other functionaries and leaders of the people, we would tend to infer that the proselyte is under a handicap in attaining prophecy, if he is not altogether excluded. It would thus appear from the following rabbinic observation:

> Observe now that when the peoples of antiquity wished to appoint a king over them, they used to bring one from any place and then appoint him over them... With Israel, however, it was different, for they produced from their own midst their leaders, kings, priests, prophets, princes....53

Listing the prophets together with all these functionaries in this assertive claim of their being of Israelite nativity, points to the conclusion that the proselyte is, if not totally barred, certainly at a great disadvantage in his attainment of the prophetic office.

---

53 Ex. R. 37:1; cf. BT Ḥullin 56b. However, this proof is vitiated by variant version (Sifre, Deut., 309; cf. Mid. Tannaim, Deut., Hoffmann, p. 159) wherein scholars are included in this list, and there is no need to show that the proselyte qualifies for the purpose of scholarship, unless it refers to such scholars who have communal responsibilities from which the proselyte is excluded. (cf. BT Ḳiddushin 76a).

Sex. - Alongside the forty-eight prophets, whose utterances were recorded for posterity, the rabbis also list the names of seven prophetesses.[54] In addition to these names we meet in the rabbinic writings other women who were credited with the possession of the Holy Spirit.[55] It is also noteworthy that included in the hyperbolically expansive rabbinic claim that there flourished in Israel six hundred thousand prophets, whose names and prophecies were not recorded because their prophecies were of only temporary interest, there also flourished an equal number of prophetesses![56]

What stands in flagrant contradiction to the above claims, and to historical fact, is a vigorous assertion by Rabbi Yoḥanan in the name of Rabbi Eleazar b. Shimeon that "We do not find God speaking to a woman save for Sarah alone." To the question raised that we do find God speaking to women, viz. Eve (Gen. 3:13, 16), Hagar (Gen. 16:9-11; 21:17),

---

[54]BT Megillah 14a, and parallels.

[55]For the matriarchs as prophetesses, see Seder Olam R., chap. 21; Gen. R. 67:9, p. 765; 72:6, p. 845; Mid. Ps. 105:4; cf. PT Berakhot 9:5, p. 14b; Tan., Toledot 10, vayetze, 8. For Raḥab - Sifre, Deut., 22, p. 33; Ruth R. 2:1. For Tamar - Midrash ha-Gadol to Gen. 38:13. For Elisheva, Aaron's wife, - Ginzei Schechter, I, p. 168. For Naomi - Ruth R. 2:11; Targ. to Ruth 1:6.

[56]Cant. R. 4:22; cf. BT Megillah 14a where prophetesses are omitted from this claim, unless we will bring them in under the use of the masculine plural which may include also feminine members. If this last assumption is correct, we will be in a position to resolve a discrepancy between the number given in this source as double six hundred thousand, while in the first source it is given only as six hundred thousand. In this source male and female prophets are listed together, which is why it has twice the number contained in the first source where male and female prophets are listed separately.

Rebekah (Gen. 25:23), the given answer is either that it was "through an agent [i.e. a prophet] or through an angel," but not by God directly.[57] With regard to Rebekah's case a third answer is proferred that "the Locution fell unto her."[58]

This last somewhat enigmatic formulation holds the key to the harmonization of the conflicting rabbinic assertions regarding the case of the woman as prophetess. It is hardly possible for Rabbi Eleazar b. Shimeon to deny the historical fact of the existence of prophetesses.[59] He is merely modifying the nature of the reception of the prophetic message of the prophetess by denying her direct divine address. The reason for this seems to have its ground in the realm of propriety and prudishness. We find it clearly expressed with regard to a somewhat similar matter. In rabbinic exegesis, the expression "he died by the mouth of God" with reference to the death of Moses (Deut. 34:5) and the death of Aaron (Num. 33:38) stands for death by a kiss from God. Whereupon the rabbis hasten to comment that Miriam, too, merited such a death, but it is not so stated in the Torah "because of respect [for God]."[60]

---

[57]PT Soṭa 7:1, p.21b;cf. Gen. R. 20: 6, p. 188; 45:9, p. 457; 48:20, p. 495; 63:7, p. 684; Mid. Ps. 9:7.

[58]PT Soṭa 7:1, p. 21b.

[59]There are writers who doubt the existence of prophetesses, but their doubts are unwarranted. See I.J.Peritz, "Woman in the Ancient Hebrew Cult," JBL,XVII(1898), 141-143.

[60]BT Baba Batra 17a.

Viewing it from this perspective, it follows that a detached divine locution, which does not offend any sensibilities nor violates the privacy of the woman, may reach the woman. We may thus safely conclude that a woman may qualify for prophecy on par with man even if, according to one opinion, without the benefit of direct divine communication.

Non-Jewishness.- Rabbinic thinking suffers from a polarity of universalism and particularism,[61] and the question of prophecy is no exception. The rabbis did not hesitate to acknowledge a number of non-Jews as prophets.[62] One of them, Balaam, was considered to have been of a rank comparable to Moses.[63] But they were equally forceful in their assertion that the non-Jews were deprived of this distinction sometime after the Exodus from Egypt. Not only was the non-Jew barred from prophesying to the Jew by virtue of the phrase "from thy midst" (Deut. 18:15), but he was also denied in the end the prerogative of prophesying even to his own people.

There are two versions current to account for the evanescence of prophecy from the non-Jewish world. According to one version, it was due to the petition of Moses: "Moses

---

[61] See M.A.Mirkin in his introd. to his ed. of Lev. R. (Tel-Aviv, 1961), pp. 20-23.

[62] Seder Olam R., chap. 21; cf. BT Baba Batra 15b; Kohel. R. 3:24; cf. Num. R. 14:22. Cf. A. Heschel, The Prophets (New York, 1962), p. 451.

[63] Sifre, Deut., 357, p. 430, and parallels.

asked that the Divine Presence should not rest on non-Jews, and God granted it to him, as it is said, 'So that I and my people shall be distinguished' (Ex. 33:16)"[64] Another version has it that it was a natural result of the erection of the Tabernacle in the desert: "Said R. Yitzhak: Before the Tabernacle was established, prophecy was prevalent amongst the nations of the world. Following the establishment of the Tabernacle, prophecy departed from them."[65]

What this had to do with the establishment of the Tabernacle is not made clear, but according to what will be shown further below,[66] the rabbis consider the Tabernacle and subsequently the Temple to have been the media through which were channelled all prophetic revelations. It was not necessary that the prophet actually be in the sanctuary when receiving a revelation, or even that he be attached thereto in the capacity of functionary. What was necessary was that the locution be received through the agency of the sanctuary. The Tabernacle and the Temple being primarily Jewish institutions, the mediation of prophetic revelations to non-Jews was excluded

---

[64] Seder Olam R., chap. 21; BT Berakhot 7a; BT Baba Batra 15b; cf. Ex. R. 32:3; Batei Midrashot, Wertheimer, V. II, p. 449.

[65] Lev. R. 1:12, p. 27; Cant. R. 2:12. As to the relationship of the non-Jew to revelation, see S. Schwartzchild, "Do Noachides Have to Believe in Revelation," JQR, LII (1962), 297-308.

[66] Pp. 121-23.

since the non-Jews had no share or affiliation with them," and the result inexorably followed that prophecy was choked off from the non-Jewish world.[67]

As a post factum justification for the exclusion of the non-Jew from prophecy, one rabbinic tradition places the entire blame on Balaam who, by his words and deeds, betrayed and perverted the office of prophecy.[68] This could not be considered a basic reason not only because it is unreasonable to penalize so many individuals because of the misdeed of one who is not related to them, but more so because the preponderant rabbinic outlook seems to be bent on making prophetism the exclusive domain of the Jew.[69] In their eagerness to maintain prophetism as the distinguishing mark of the Jew, the rabbis assert that all the non-Jewish prophets are the descendants of Milkah, Abraham's sister-in-law, thus keeping all prophecy within the confines of Abraham's family.[70]

---

[67] For the relationship of the non-Jew to the Temple, see 1Kings 8:41-43; Isa. 56:7; but cf. Lev. 22:18,25, and Sifra ad loc.; BT Mehaḥot 73b; Mishna Shekalim 1:5; PT Shekalim 1:4; BT Arakhin 6a; Mishna, Kelim 1:8; Josephus, Antiquities, book 15, chap. 11, sec. 5, and book 11, chap. 4, sec. 3. See J. Albo, Ikkarim, part 3, chap. 11, for a different approach.

This rabbinic position coincides with another rabbinic view which explains the absence of the Divine Presence from the Second Temple because it was built under the auspices of Cyrus who was a non-Jew (BT Yoma 10a, and parallels). It thus becomes apparent that the rabbis regard both the Temple and prophecy as a distinct gift given exclusively to the Jew.

[68] Tan., Buber, balak, beg.; Num. R. 20:1.

[69] The well-known passage: "I call heaven and earth to witness, whether Gentile or Jew...the Holy Spirit rests upon one in accordance with the deeds he does..."(Seder Eliahu R., chap. 9, p.48) has no bearing on the Holy Spirit of prophecy. It refers to the other functions of the Holy Spirit in which Jew and non-Jew share alike.

[70] Yelandenu, quoted in Yalk. Shim., I, 766. There is a late midrash cited in Yalkut Re'uveni, balak, which asserts that even Balaam descends from Milkah.

Whether the departure of prophecy from the non-Jew was due to the erection of the Tabernacle or was brought about by the prayer of Moses does not materially affect its dating, since both events took place within a relatively short space of time.[71] This forced the rabbis to date all non-Jewish prophets to a period no later than that of Moses. That is why Job, who was a Gentile, is considered to have been a contemporary of Moses. According to those rabbis who hold that he flourished long after Moses, Job is considered to have been a Jew.[72] The difficulty which Balaam presents inasmuch as he delivered his famous oracle towards the close of the Jewish wandering in the desert, which was long after the erection of the Tabernacle, was rationalized by the rabbis as an admissible exception because this oracle was "for the benefit of Israel."[73]

---

[71] Moses' prayer took place following the making of the golden calf (Ex. 33:16), while the erection of the Tabernacle took place about eight months later (Seder Olam R., chaps. 6-7).

[72] BT Baba Batra 15b.

[73] Lev. R. 1:2, p. 27; but cf. Rashi to Ex. 33:17. Cf. Yalḳ. Shim., I, 771, where it is stated that as soon as he finished this oracle, his prophetic status was terminated. It should be noted, however, that this fact does not confer upon him the title of having been a prophet to the Jewish people since such a possibility is precluded by the rabbinic interpretation of the verse "from thy midst" (see note 44). In reality, his prophecy was given to the non-Jewish world, even though it was favorable and beneficial to the Jewish people.

Celibacy. - The rabbis have sung loud the praises of marriage to the point of not considering a person as a "man" until he takes a wife.[74] Yet, the rabbis do not require marriage as a prerequisite for the tenure of any office save that of the high priest.[75]

There is, however, one factor to be considered. According to the rabbis, a joyous state of mind is a requirement for the Divine Presence to rest upon the prophet.[76] But an unmarried person is considered to be "dwelling without joy."[77] However, this is too synthetic an argument from which to deduce, with any degree of certainty, that the rabbis bar a celibate from prophecy. Besides, it is reasonable to assume that this last statement has reference only to the average individual, whereas the superior human being, who is preoccupied with spiritual pursuits, is able to find joy without being married. In fact, the rabbis condone celibacy for such an individual when he becomes enamored with the learning of the Torah, as was the case with Ben Azai.[78]

---

[74] BT Yebamot 62b,63a. Cf. S.W.Baron, op. cit., V. II, pp. 217-223.

[75] Mishna Yoma 1:1. The requirement that a member of the Sanhedrin should have children (BT Sanhedrin 36b) has application only to eligibility of sitting in judgment in cases of capital offenses for reasons of mercy, but it does not bar the childless from membership in the Sanhedrin when it considers other matters within its jurisdiction. This can be conclusively shown from the fact that for the capital offense of the "instigator," to whom mercy is not shown, even the childless qualifies (Ibid.).

[76] BT Shabbat 30b. [77] BT Yebamot 62b. [78] Ibid. 63b.

Furthermore, there seem to be several actual cases of individuals receiving prophecy before marriage. To name a few: Jacob (Gen. 28:13), Joseph (Gen. 37:6-10; Gen. R. 87:5,8), Hosea whom God commanded to take a wife for a different reason (Hos. 1:2).[79] Elisha appears to have been a bachelor. According to a rabbinic interpretation, Elisha was recognized by the Shunemite woman as "a holy man" (2Kings 4:9) because she never found semen stains on his bed sheet.[80] This strongly indicates that he must have been a bachelor, otherwise such would be weak proof indeed of his holiness. Hezekiah, though not a prophet, possessed the Holy Spirit even while he was unmarried. He refused to marry for the longest time "because he saw by the Holy Spirit that he will give birth to a bad son."[81] Jeremiah seems to have been unmarried (Jer. 16:2).[82] In sum, it is evident that celibacy is not an absolute disqualification from prophecy.[83]

That it constitutes a considerable impediment to the attainment of prophecy is, however, hardly possible to gainsay. Firstly, failure to fulfil the first law in the Torah, the mitzvah of procreation, is in the rabbinic view a serious offense,[84] even if it was condoned in the case of a person whose

---

[79]BT Pesahim 87a. [80]BT Berakhot 10b. [81]Ibid. 10a.

[82]Cf. L.B.Paton, "The Problem of Suffering in the Israelitic Prophets," JBL, XLVI (1927), 118.

[83]Only in the Zohar (beg. of Leviticus) do we find that the unmarried is unworthy of prophecy; cf. M.Trani(Mabit), Bet Elokim, sha'ar ha-yesodot, chap. 56.

[84]BT Yebamot 63b.

soul "became enamored with the Torah," but only with great misgivings. Moses' separation from his wife ultimately received divine sanction only because of the unique nature of his prophecy. He had to be constantly ready for a divine call which would be precluded on the day of cohabitation.[85] That was the mistake of Zipporah, the wife of Moses, who confided to Miriam and remarked that the wives of the seventy elders chosen to partake of Moses' Holy Spirit had no reason to rejoice, but rather to be sad, for they would from now on be deprived of the company of their husbands as she had been. This provoked Miriam to criticize her brother Moses for what she thought was an act of arrogance on his part to think that he was different from all other prophets, such as she and her brother Aaron were, to whom God spoke and who yet fulfilled their conjugal obligations. This is the rabbinic understanding of the verse in Num. 12:2. To demonstrate dramatically the error of Zipporah and Aaron in comparing themselves to Moses, the divine locution came "suddenly" upon them and Moses (Ibid. 12:4). According to a rabbinic interpretation, "suddenly" implies that Zipporah and Aaron were at the time unfit for a divine revelation as a result of a defilement contracted by conjugal relations. As they were crying in embarrassment for water with which to purify themselves, they could not help but realize that it was not arrogance which motivated Moses to abstain from his wife, but that he was compelled to do so by virtue of his kind of prophecy, which required him to be in

---

[85] BT Shabbat 87a; BT Yebamot 62a; Targ. J. to Deut. 5:28; cf. Deut. R., end.

a state of constant readiness.[86]

We may thus safely conclude that, except for Moses, the prophet should be married. First of all, if marriage is permissible, as we have seen, he has no reason to do away with the mitzvah of procreation. Then, any prophet who refuses to marry exposes himself to the presumptuous error of comparing himself to Moses. The only exception that can be made is a case like the one of Jeremiah, who did so at the direct behest of God (Jer. 16:2). As will be shown below, a prophet has the power to suspend the fulfilment of a law for a limited time or in a given instance.[87] Such may have been the case with Elisha, too. In brief, the unmarried state, even if not an absolute hindrance, cannot be considered free of all handicap for the aspirant prophet.

Location. - With the conquest of the Land of Israel, it became the exclusive habitat of prophetism. All other lands were thenceforth precluded from having a prophet rise on their soil. "Before the Land of Israel was chosen, all lands were fit for Locutions; once the land of Israel was chosen, all other lands were excluded."[88] This was what Jonah attempted to accomplish

---

[86]Tan., Buber, metzora', 6, p. 46; Yalk. Shim., I, 737.

[87]Infra, pp. 183-85.

[88]Mekilta, bo',1, p. 2; cf. Mekilta de RSBY, p. 7; variant reading to Mid. Ps., ed. Buber, p. 376, note 1; cf. Petihta to Lam. R., 24, beg. The rabbinic comment in the Sifra to Lev. 26:41 "The Israelites should not say since we are in exile among the nations of the world, let us do as they do. I will not let them, but I will appoint prophets over them, and they will bring them back under My wings to do good," does not necessarily imply that the prophets will arise in exile, for it may have reference to the prophets who came with them into exile who will be given this new task.

by fleeing from the Land of Israel. Even though he was painfully aware of the ubiquity and universality of God, by virtue of the very message he was charged to bring to the non-Jewish city of Nineveh, he was yet attempting to escape. What he was planning was not to run away from God as such, but to locate himself on alien soil, where the divine locution would be restrained from reaching him.[89]

The rabbis found support for this position in the locus classicus of prophecy, in the text: "A prophet from thy midst." The rabbis infer: "But not from outside the Land of Israel."[90] However, although this preclusion seems to be absolute in its sweep, the rabbis were forced by the actual example of Ezekiel's prophesying in Babylonia to limit this preclusion to the literal context of the verse in question, namely, to the preclusion of a prophet having his initiation on a foreign soil. Because Ezekiel was launched on his prophetic career while still residing in the Land of Israel, it was possible for him to continue in his prophetic office even after going into exile. That is why Jonah in

---

[89]Mekilta, loc. cit.; cf. PRE, chap. 10; Tan., va-yikra, 8.

[90]Sifre, ad loc.

[91]Mekilta, loc. cit.; BT Mo'ed Katan 25a; Targ J. to Ez. 1:3; cf. Ex R. 23:6. This principle has an analogy in the law which bars ordination to anyone residing outside the Land of Israel, but if he received ordination while residing in the Land of Israel, he will continue to exercise all the rights of ordination wherever he may subsequently be located (BT Sanhedrin 14a).

the end did not succeed in his endeavor to escape the divine charge even after he was outside of the Land of Israel.

However, there seems to be a variant rabbinic opinion which does not altogether disqualify other lands for prophecy. Thus, it is possible for prophecy to take place even abroad so long as it is in an uncontaminated place, such as near water or in a plain, which was the case with Ezekiel and Daniel.[92]

The difference between these two views seems to stem from the different rationalization each one offers for the exclusion of all alien lands from the prerogative of prophecy. Evidently, the latter view holds that it is because all alien lands are defiled with all kinds of contaminating abominations. This coincides with the many rabbinic declarations that no divine revelation is possible in a place wherein idols are found. Thus, Jacob was deprived of prophetic revelations while he resided in Laban's house.[93] Similarly, Moses could not receive the divine locution in Egypt while he was within the city limits "because it was filled with abominations and idols."[94] That was the purpose of the king Aḥaz when he repaired to an unclean place, "the field of the launderer" (Isa. 7:4), because

---

[92]Mekilta, loc. cit.; cf. D. Kimḥi's commentary to Ez. 1:3; and cf. Gen. R. 17:6, p.157; cf. J.Z.Lauterbach, Rabbinic Essays (Cincinnati, 1951), pp.305-44, where in his essay on Tashlik he brings together the various sources touching on the significance of bodies of water in this and other regards.

[93]Tan., va-yetze, 10; PRE, chap. 36; cf. Tan., va-yetze, 21.

[94]Mekilta, loc. cit.; Ex. R. 15:6.

he desired to prevent Isaiah from being able to prophesy there.[95]

Judged from this perspective, once the Land of Israel was chosen, all other lands became the heritage of the other nations who were left to their idolatry, and all inhabited areas are treated as being either actually or potentially defiled.[96]

However, according to the first opinion, it appears that the drawback is not so much with God but rather with the would-be prophet. Any Jew living outside the Land of Israel is bound to be affected by the foreign influences round about him, and he is unable to rise to the prophetic state.[97] If, however, he received the call to prophecy while he was in the Land of Israel, he attains an immunity to the deleterious influences present on foreign soil and he is, thus, able to continue in his prophetic office wherever he may find himself.

---

[95] PT Sanhedrin 10:1, p. 27d; Lev. R. 36:3, p. 843.

[96] Cf. Deut. 4:19; Micah 4:5; BT Avodah Zarah 55a; Sifre to Deut. 12:3; Mid. Tannaim, Hoffmann, pp. 59, 62. See BT Berakhot 57b concerning the benediction upon seeing of a destroyed idolatrous location outside the Land of Israel; and cf. S. Lieberman, Tosefta Ki-fshuta, Berakhot, pp. 103-104. See also Tosafot to BT Sanhedrin 63b and M. Isserlis in Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim, chap. 156, end; and Pithei Teshuvah, Yoreh de'ah, chap. 147, whether association of other forces with God is proscribed to the non-Jew or not. In any event, the very fact that the land is in his legal possession gives him title to establish therein whatever idol he may see fit. Hence, any place outside the Land of Israel is to be regarded as potentially contaminated with idolatry.

[97] Cf. Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, part 2, chap. 36, end.

That, in the rabbinic view, the Jewishness of a Jew in an alien land is ipso facto considered unwholesome is clearly revealed in pronouncements such as: "Whosoever dwells outside the Land of Israel is as if he has no God!"[98] "All Israelites outside the Land of Israel are idol worshippers in purity."[99]

Being outqualified. - In a class by himself stands the qualified and worthy individual who will not attain the prophetic state only because of the existence of another individual who overshadows him by his eminent superiority. Because the more endowed individual is able to perform the functions of the prophet with greater success and effectiveness, the lesser endowed individual is deprived of the opportunity of becoming a prophet.

Furthermore, this principle will act not only to prevent the outqualified potential prophet from becoming a prophet in actuality, but it will also act to bring about the departure of prophecy from an actual prophet the moment another person with superior qualities, who is better suited to perform the same functions of the existing prophet, appears on the scene. Such was the unfortunate lot of Aaron, in the view of the rabbis. Even though Aaron started out as a prophet before his brother Moses,[100] yet as soon as Moses was established as

---

[98]Tosef., Avodah Zarah 5:5; BT Ketubot 110b.

[99]Tosef., Avodah Zarah 5:5; BT Avodah Zarah 8a.

[100]Tan., Buber, shemot, 24, p. 15.

a prophet, Aaron's prophecy ceased.[101] That is one of the reasons, according to the rabbis, why Moses was at first reluctant to accept his commission. Commenting on the verse, "Send by the hand of him whom Thou sendest" (Ex. 4:13), the rabbis state:

> One must not think that Moses refused to go. It is not so! He was acting in deference to Aaron. Moses said: 'Before I arose, my brother Aaron prophesied to them in Egypt for eighty years... Moses thought, 'If I now trespass upon the domain of my brother, he will be vexed... 102

Thus, wherever it is written in the Bible, "And God spoke to Moses and Aaron," the rabbis interpret it to mean that God spoke to Moses to relay it to Aaron![103] Moreover, even in the case where it is written, "And God said to Aaron," (Num. 18:1) and the name of Moses does not at all appear in the text, the rabbis assume that it was Moses who conveyed the message to Aaron.[104]

> Know that all the Locutions that were said to Aaron, were said to him through Moses. But why does it say 'to Aaron'? To teach us that Aaron was worthy, but the quality of Moses was greater. 105

---

[101] Mekilta, beg.; Yalk. Shim., I, 752.

[102] Ex. R. 3:21.

[103] Mekilta, beg.; Sifra to Lev. 1:4; Yalk. Shim., I, 755.

[104] Sifre, Num., 117, p. 134; but cf. Mekilta, beg. See K. Kahane in Leo Jung Jubilee Volume (New York, 1962), pp. 107-119.

[105] Yalk. Shim., I, 752. Cf. Targ. J. to Ex. 6:28, where it is claimed that when God spoke to Moses, Aaron would listen in.

In view of the foregoing, wherever we find more than one prophet functioning during a given time in the same place we must assume that each one of them was unable to serve all the needs of prophetism. This is piquantly illustrated by the rabbis:

> Jeremiah was one of the three prophets who prophesied in the same generation: Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Ḥuldah. Jeremiah prophesied in the market places, Zephaniah in the houses of assembly and Ḥuldah at the women's places. 106

It thus becomes clear that when we meet several prophets during any one period, a division of duties is to be assumed, otherwise only the highest qualified would be chosen.

It is for this reason that the rabbis were constrained to explain why Isaiah was called upon to prophesy at a time when there were already other prophets busy prophesying. The rabbis conclude that it was not so much that Isaiah happened to become ripe for prophecy at just that time and he could not be denied his due rights to prophecy, but that he received his call to prophecy only because of the ineffectiveness of the existing prophets whom he now surpassed. In the words of the rabbis:

> I was walking about in my house of study, and I heard the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us' (Isa. 6:8); I have sent Micah, and they smote him on the cheek...I have sent Amos, and they called him 'stammerer'...Immediately I said, 'Here I am, send me' (ibid.)... 107

---

106 Pesiḳ. R., 26, p. 129b; Yalḳ. Shim., II, 566; cf. BT Megillah 14b; Targ J. to Micah 6:4.

107 Lev. R. 10:2, p. 197, and parallels.

Here we have a striking demonstration that prophecy is not to be regarded as a personal attainment nor as a divine gift to an individual so that anyone else's greater qualities will have no effect on his standing. Instead, it is to be looked upon as a charge and as a public service so that only the best suited for the particular task will be chosen, while all others will be excluded or given a different assignment.

CHAPTER V

THE INAUGURATION AND THE ACCREDITATION OF THE PROPHET

What are the diacritical marks of the true prophet, and what is the method by which he gains recognition, questions which intrigued modern scholars, were of intense concern to the rabbis.[1] They did not treat this problem lightly, nor did they leave it entirely to faith alone. True, the element of faith will undoubtedly enter the picture,[2] but only after the prophet will have been assayed and found genuine, put to the test and validated.

The rabbis made use of several criteria in the process of authentication, but they did not apply the selfsame criteria to all cases in question. It stands to reason that in view of the variances amongst prophets in the manner of their attaining prophetic status, and because of the essential differences in the subject matter of their prophecies, no unified standard of validation is possible, nor is it desirable. The exact criterion required will have to be determined by the very nature of the particular prophet and the precise character of his prophetic message.

---

[1] For a modern treatment of this problem cf. J. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 187-196; S. Mowinckel "'The Spirit' and 'The Word' in the Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets," JBL, LIII (1934), 217-224; Idem in Acta Orientalia, XIII, 277ff.

[2] BT Ḥullin 57b; Mekilta, baḥodesh, 2, p. 210; Seder Eliahu R., chap. (9) 10, p.51; Sifre to Deut. 32:20, p. 367; and cf. Midrash ha-Gadol to Gen. 22:3.

Rising from the ranks.- The realm of prophetism in its day was not a desert inhabited by a special breed of the hardy few, as has been conceived by some modern authors.[3] From Moses down to Malachi, prophetism formed a continuum in which the prophetic tradition was relayed in succession from generation to generation. In the words of the rabbis: "All prophets received their prophecy, prophet from prophet..."[4] The prophet did not as a rule lead a lonely existence, living in splendid isolation atop his high-placed position. On the contrary, a good many of the prophets were surrounded not only by crowds of ready listeners,[5] but by schools of eager disciples as well.[6]

The prophetic environment was well defined, and held in sufficient respect, so that it could, to a large degree, set its own course, knowing that its self-determining principles

---

[3]Ch. W. Reines Priest and Prophets (Heb.; New York, 1945), p. 73; cf. Y. Kaufman, op. cit., V. I, p. 712; V. III, p.30.

[4]Lev. R. 10:2, p. 199, PSRK, 16, p. 125b. Isaiah is specifically mentioned (ibid.) as an outstanding exception to this rule: "But you [received the prophecy] from the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written 'The Holy Spirit is upon me because the Lord has annointed me...'(Isa. 61:1)."
S. W. Baron, op. cit., V. I, p. 79, asserts that there was "an enforced silence of Judean prophecy during the reign of Manasseh." But this is not in accord with the rabbinic claim that the prophets Nahum and Habakkuk, and some versions add Joel, flourished during the reign of Manasseh; and the reason why these prophets were not explicitly dated in the Bible according to his reign is not to give credit and honor to the name of a wicked king like Menasseh (Seder Olam R., chap. 20; Yalk. Shim., II, 246). Cf. 2 Chron. 33:10,18.
Regarding this idea of the succession of prophecy, cf. Kohel. R. 1:5; BT Kiddushin 72b; BT Yoma 38a; Gen. R. 58:2.

[5]Cf. S.W.Baron, op. cit., V. I, p. 87.

[6]Cf. H. H. Rowley, Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel (London, 1956), p. 24; A. Lods, op. cit., p. 102.

would be widely accepted. Thus, from the historical perspective, the problem of the inauguration and the validation of a prophet could hardly have assumed the proportions it took on in critical retrospect. The confirmation of a new prophet did not follow a pattern much different from the one in practice in the world of scholarship at large.[7]

There was in most instances the master prophet, heir to the prophetic tradition, and publicly acknowledged, whose unquestioned authority needed no verification.[8] He, in turn, guided and controlled the destinies of all the aspirants to prophecy. He would groom one of his favorites to become his successor, and at times, he would confirm him into prophecy

---

[7]According to the rabbis Joshua, in trying to prevent Eldad and Medad (Num. 11:28) from prophesying without authorization from Moses, compared them to a disciple who "decides a point of law in the presence of his teacher," which is forbidden (BT Sanhedrin 17a).

[8]Note should be taken, however, of such instances where even a prophet of long standing will have to prove himself by a sign. If his prophecy is challenged and contradicted by another claimant to prophecy, as it happened to Jeremiah, who was opposed by Ḥananiah b. Azur (Jer. chap. 28), he will have to produce a sign. Thus when Ḥananiah demanded a proving sign from Jeremiah, Jeremiah reluctantly said to him: "Yes, so here I am giving you a miraculous sign which will affect you: Within the year you will die! And so it happened to him". (PT Sanhedrin 11:7, p. 30b).

Another instance where a confirming sign is in order is when the prophet prophesies the occurrence of an extraordinary event such as the recovery of king Hezekiah, which the rabbis liken to the resurrection of the dead, since a recovery from a mortal sickness had not occurred prior to the day of Hezekiah. (PT Sanhedrin 11:8, p. 30c, based on 2Kings 20:8; 19:29). See Gen. R. 65:4, where it is asserted that Hezekiah was the first man to recover from a mortal sickness.

during his own lifetime.[9] Needless to say, this new prophet faced no problem of recognition and legitimation, for he emerged with ready-made credentials.

The self-trained and the divinely-initiated prophet. - Confirmation becomes an acute and vexing problem in the rare cases of the self-trained or the divinely-initiated prophet. Such a prophet, emerging from relative obscurity seeking the prominence of his role, will undoubtedly meet with skepticism and mistrust.[10] He will certainly become subject to the earnest scrutiny of the regnant prophetic circles before gaining full credence.

---

[9]An instructive illustration of the importance of obtaining the confirmation of an established prophet is furnished by the rabbinic comment on the verse: "And the Lord said to Aaron go to meet Moses...and he went...and he kissed him" (Ex 4:27). There is a difference of opinion as to who kissed whom. According to one opinion, "it was Aaron who kissed Moses so that Moses could come and they would believe him" (Ex. R. 5:10). In other words, this kiss that Aaron, who was a long established prophet in Egypt (Ex. R. 3:16, and parallels), gave to Moses represented his confirmation of Moses' prophetic status. Thus we see that even though Moses came back from Midian armed with powerful signs given to him by God (Ex. 4:1-10), he was in need of the confirmation extended to him by Aaron, who was an established prophet. It should be noted in passing that the other interpretation to the effect that it was Moses who kissed Aaron and thus confirmed the prophecy of Aaron, does not imply that the long standing prophetism of Aaron was in need of confirmation. What it means is that the coming of Moses to effect the redemption of Israel was the beginning of the realization of Aaron's prophetism.

In this connection reference should be made to a rather enigmatic division of opinion (PT Sanhedrin 11:8, p. 30c) as to whether two prophets who began to prophesy at the same time need to prove themselves or whether their mutual confirmation is sufficient.

[10]Cf. Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 151.

It was this kind of prophet that the rabbis had in mind when they drew the distinction between the prophet and the sage:

> They [i.e. the prophet and the sage] are likened to a king who sent out two imperial agents. With regard to one, he wrote: 'Do not trust him unless he shows you my signature and seal.' With regard to the other, he wrote: 'Trust him even though he will not show you my seal and signature.' 11

Concerning this kind of a prophet, the rabbis state: "The prophet who first begins to prophesy, if he gives you a sign or a wonder, is to be accepted, but if he does not, is not to be accepted."[12] What kind of sign is deemed sufficient, the rabbis do not define specifically.[13] In all likelihood, they

---

[11]PT Berakhot 1:7, p. 3b; PT Sanhedrin 11:6, p. 30b; Cant. R. 1:18. S. Schechter's interpreation of the phrase "my signature and seal," in his Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, p. 124, is forced and unconvincing, for this phrase has reference simply to any sign which will prove the claimant to prophecy to be true.

[12]PT Sanhedrin 11:8, p. 30c; cf. BT Horayot 13a, where prophets are termed "wonder workers." Ch. Tchernowitz, in his Toledot ha-Halakha (New York, 1936). V. II, p. 90, claims that "we find nowhere that it was required of the prophets at the initiation of their prophetism that they produce a sign or a wonder." He evidently chose to overlook the rabbinic sources which we have cited.

[13]The term "sign or wonder" is used in the Bible with regard to the false prophet (Deut. 13:2). In this connection, the rabbis in Sifre, ad loc. define it in rather general terms. However, we find a specific example of a sign which a prophet may furnish to prove himself a true prophet. The sign, "Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes which are upon it shall be poured out" (1Kings 13:3), was given, according to a rabbinic interpretation, in answer to the king's demand: "Moses wrote in the Torah that 'If a prophet shall rise in thy midst...and he will give you a sign or a wonder...' (Deut. 13:2); what wonder do you now give me?" (Tan., Buber, va-yikra, end, p. 10; cf. Targ. J., ad loc. and cf. Tan., va-yera, 13; Num. R. 23:8). Another example of a sign proving the true prophet is the prediction by Jeremiah of the death of Ḥananiah b. Azur within the year (PT Sanhedrin 11:7 p. 30b).

must have had in mind the classic example of Moses, who also came out of the obscurity of Midian, which treats of exactly this problem. When Moses raised to God the problem of his gaining credence, he was provided with three signs (Ex. 4:1-10; cf. v. 21; and cf. Ex. R. 3:15).

However, the requirement of a sign from the beginning prophet will be contingent on the nature of his prophetic message. If the theme of his prophecy is exhortation to his fellow Jews to abide by the laws of the Torah, there will be no need for the prophet to prove his divine commission, as the disposition of our knowledge concerning the true origin of his message will neither add nor detract from the inherent worth of his message.[14] If, however, his prophecy contradicts anything recorded in the Pentateuch, no sign or wonder will be of any avail, for he will then be automatically branded as a false prophet, making him liable to the death penalty. This is what happened to Isaiah. According to rabbinic tradition, Manasseh had him tried and sentenced to death as a false prophet for allegedly having contradicted a statement contained in the Pentateuch.[15]

The need for proof may also be unnecessary if the prophet is dealing with the basic fabric of prophetism, the divine plan of history, emanating from the processes of Providential justice. For such a role he should find support and

---

[14]Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 117; cf. I. Abrabnel to Deut. 18:15; A. Heschel, God in Search of Man, pp. 240, 256.

[15]BT Yebamot 49b.

confirmation from any established prophet at the time. For the rabbis, basing themselves on the verse, "The Lord God will do nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7), conclude that whenever one prophet is entrusted with such a message, all contemporary prophets are informed of its content, even though they may not be charged with it and are, in fact, forbidden to reveal it.[16] Such being the case, the new prophet should be welcomed without sign or proof by all existing prophets and hailed as one of their very own! This is what is implied in the rather puzzling statement of R. Samuel b. Naḥman: "Every prophet who arose would state the prophecy of his fellow prophet in order to prove his own prophecy."[17]

Even R. Joshua b. Levi, who disagrees with R. Samuel b. Naḥman, and avers: "Every prophet is called to give his own prophecy,"[18] does not necessarily deny the truth of the original premise that every prophet is apprised of the divine "secret" entrusted to a particular prophet. All he claims is

---

[16]BT Sanhedrin 89b; cf. BT Yoma 4b.

[17]Ex R. 42:7. The commentaries (ad loc.) are hard put to explain the meaning of this passage, but we have kept close to the text from which it is not wise to wander too far off without sufficient proof.
In this connection note should be taken of a rabbinic tradition which claims that Aaron would listen while God was communicating with Moses (Targ. J. to Ex 6:28; cf. Sekhel Tov, ad loc. and to Ex. 12:43; and cf. Mekilta, pisha 3, p. 9, and editor's note thereto. But cf. Num. R. 14:35.

[18]Ex. R. 42:7.

that the new prophet is not authorized to divulge it even if it is for the sake of proving his legitimacy. However, his new status will still admit of corroboration if his message is of the kind whose content is made known to all existing prophets, and he will thus become known to them as a true prophet without his having to divulge their prophecies, as claimed by R. Samuel b. Naḥman.

The picture will change drastically, however, when the beginning prophet will arrogate to himself some of the special powers belonging to prophetism, as for example, the power to issue an injunction to a person,[19] or the power to suspend temporarily the operation of a Biblical law.[20] To gain credence for such purposes, the beginning prophet will be required to furnish "a sign or a wonder" to demonstrate his prophetic status.[21]

The role of the sages. - In the accreditation of the divinely initiated prophet, the rabbis entrust the disposition of his ultimate authorization to the judgment of the sages, the so-called Sanhedrin.[22] Isaiah and Obadiah are given as specific examples of such a case.

---

[19] 1Kings 20:35-38; Sifre, Deut., 85; BT Sanhedrin 89b; cf. BT Ta'anit 22b; Lam. R. 1:61.

[20] BT Yebamot 90b; Sifre, Deut., 175.

[21] BT Sanhedrin 89b.

[22] This will shed light on the halakha that a false prophet is tried by the Sanhedrin of Seventy-one rather than by the Sanhedrin of Twenty-three, which tries almost all cases

Basing themselves on the change from singular to plural in the verse, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us" (Isa. 6:8), the rabbis conclude that the phrase "for us" does not refer to God, but stands for the Sanhedrin,[23] by whose authorization Isaiah will prophesy. In their words: "Even though he [i.e. Isaiah] was prophesying from God, yet were the Sanhedrin to disassociate itself from him he would not have had the authorization to prophesy."[24]

---

of capital offenses (Mishna Sanhedrin 1:5), for only the Sanhedrin of Seventy-one is qualified to pass on the legitimacy of any prophet in question. For this reason, too, the question of granting or denying the right of certain books to become part of the Biblical canon was within the jurisdiction of the sages. Concerning Ezekiel, see BT Shabbat 13b; concerning Kohelet, see BT Shabbat 30b; cf. Lev. R. 28:1, p. 648, and parallels; concerning the Scroll of Esther, see BT Megillah 7a, and parallels.

Cf. R. Hai Gaon's responsum in Sha'arei Teshuvah, 14, where he states: "The prophet prophesies by the decree of the Sanhedrin!" Cf. Yehuda ha-Levi, Kuzari, part 4, 3.

[23]This term is of course an anachronism in Isaiah's times as it came into use only during Maccabean times or thereabouts, but the rabbis merely employ it as a convenient term for the supreme body of the sages in any generation.

[24]Agg. Ber., chap. 14; Yalk. Shim., II, 385. H. W. Robinson, in his Inspiration and Revelation in the O. T. (Oxford, 1946), pp. 167-169 is also baffled by the change to the plural in this verse, but he infers from it that the prophet becomes part of the "heavenly assembly." He finds corroboration for his interpretation in the use of the plural in the verse "Let us make a man" (Gen. 1:26), which he assumes that it refers to the "heavenly assembly." It is noteworthy that insofar as this last verse is concerned he was anticipated by the rabbis who have adopted this identical interpretation (Gen. R., ad loc.; cf. Rashi, ad loc. and BT Sanhedrin 38b). Although regarding the verse in Isaiah the rabbis have chosen a slightly different view, it is not far apart, for the earthly Sanhedrin is in a sense the pale reflection of its heavenly counterpart. See Tan., Buber, va-yera, p. 97; Tan., shemot, 17.

As proof that Obadiah, too, received his authorization from the sages, the rabbis follow a similar approach. They derive it from the opening verse of Obadiah's prophesy: "We have heard a message from the Lord," in which Obadiah speaks in the plural voice, thus implying that he has received his sanction from the sages with whom he associates himself in his prophecy.[25]

In this connection, too, the rabbis must have had in mind the locus classicus of the inauguration of the new prophet, namely that of Moses. As recorded in the Bible, Moses had to appear before the elders to gain recognition as a prophet before he could go to the people (Ex. 3:16).

Faith as a necessary factor. - What has been considered thus far has been either technical means, or logical deductions by means of which the prophet is legitimated. However, it should be made clear that it did not escape the rabbis that no foolproof system can be devised to ascertain the validity of the true prophet, and that it is not possible to design a test to be given to the prophet in order to prove his credentials beyond all possible doubt.

That is why, when the rabbis have need to describe the true prophet, whose prophetic injunction we are constrained to

---

[25] Ibid. Although Obadiah, according to one rabbinic tradition, was a disciple of Elijah (Bet ha-Midrash, Jellinek, V. II, p. 95), he did not receive his authorization from his master. Cf. Tosefta Soṭa 12:5 wherein we are informed that after Elijah's ascent to heaven, prophecy departed from all his disciples with the exception of Elisha.

obey even when it calls for an infraction of a Biblical law, they have recourse to the term "muḥzaḳ,"[26] one who has a recognized or an established status. It is true that "ḥazaḳah" is accepted as evidence by the Halakha in many instances of the ritual, civil and criminal law, but it is never considered of the same calibre as, for example, the testimony of witnesses.[27] Yet it is sufficiently binding to require us to obey the injunction of such a prophet. From the foregoing it becomes apparent that the rabbis do not require of the prophet supreme evidence since such is not always possible.

In the realm of ritual, civil and criminal laws, the Halakha abounds in examples of ways and means which confer a "ḥazaḳah" upon a person, an object or a situation.[28] However, such accounts are lacking in regard to the attainment of this coveted "ḥazaḳah" of prophetism. But there can be little doubt that whatever the pattern of behavior and manner of prophesying which may be required of the aspirant prophet, the

---

[26]BT Sanhedrin 89b; cf. R. Margulies in his Margoliyot ha-Yam, ad loc., where he points out a noteworthy fact in the verse, 1Kings 18:36, that only in this verse is the title "prophet" appended to the name of Elijah, an appendage which is conspicuously missing from his name throughout the entire account in that chapter wherein he is mentioned a number of times. It is because only in this verse does Elijah dare perform an act contrary to Biblical law, to sacrifice outside the Temple in Jerusalem, and he must therefore fall back on his established status as a prophet, by virtue of which he is able so to act.

[27]For a treatment of ḥazaḳah, see I. Lampronti, Paḥad Yitzḥak, s. v. Ḥazaḳah.

[28]E.g. BT Yebamot 64b; BT Ketubot 24b; 25b; 72a; BT Kiddushin 79b, 80a; BT Baba Batra 167b.

element of faith on the part of his audience is of vital importance to him if he is to attain the "ḥazaḳah" of a true prophet.[29]

This correquisite of faith which the prophet must evoke is also operative when he may attempt to prove his legitimacy through the performance of a miraculous feat. For without faith even the most spectacular miracle can be rationalized, or be relegated to the working of witchcraft.[30] According to the rabbis, this was indeed what Elijah feared when he wrought the miracle of bringing heavenly fire down on Mt. Carmel. Elijah found it necessary to pray that God prevent the onlookers from entertaining such thoughts and from levelling at him the accusation of witchcraft.

> Said R. Abahu, why did Elijah say 'answer me' (1Kings 18:37) twice? This is to teach that Elijah said to the Holy One, blessed be He, 'Sovereign of the world, answer me so that fire will descend from heaven...and answer me so that Thou wilt divert their mind so that they will not say this is the work of witchcraft.' [31]

In view of the rabbinic assertion that the efficacy of witchcraft may be tested by water,[32] Elijah's pouring of water upon the altar (1Kings 18:34) should have served as a

---

[29] Cf. rabbinic comment on the verse, "Also in you [i.e. Moses] they shall have faith forever" (Ex. 19:9), where the word "also" is elaborated into "in you and also in the prophets who will arise after you." (Mekilta, ad loc. p. 210; cf. Mekilta de RSBY, p. 140).

[30] Cf. Maimonides, Mishne Torah, yesodei ha-Torah, 8:2; cf. also, "Witchcraft...weakens the heavenly council" (BT Sanhedrin 67b).

[31] BT Berakhot 9b. Cf. S. Edels in his novellae, ad loc., where he draws a correct parallel to what happened to Moses when Pharaoh likened his feats to those of Pharaoh's own magicians.

sufficiently reassuring precaution against any suspicion of witchcraft. Yet Elijah did not rely on this measure alone, and solicited divine help in order to instill in the spectators faith in the descent of the fire from heaven. This is clear evidence that whatever extraordinary act the prophet may do to prove himself, he will always stand in need of evoking the quality of faith in his audience.

We now gain a better appreciation of the prohibition of putting the prophet to too many tests, which is based on the verse, "Ye shall not try the Lord your God" (Deut. 6:16).[33] For no matter how many tests the prophet may successfully pass, his ultimate acceptance must still depend on the all-important element of faith. Hence, too many tests are totally unnecessary and merely serve to reflect an ultimate lack of faith in God, for God no less than the prophet depends on faith for His acceptance.

Inauguration of the new prophet. - The coronation of a new king or the consecration of a new high priest was effected by

---

[32]BT Sanhedrin 67b.

[33]True, this prohibition is not explicitly mentioned in any of the extant Talmudic-midrashic sources, but Maimonides in Mishne Torah, yesodei ha-Torah, 10:5, lists it as one of the commandments. Besides, this interpretation of the verse parallels the rabbinic interpretation of a similar verse: "Why do you contest with me, why do you test the Lord?" (Ex. 17:2), which reads as follows: "Whenever you quarrel with me [i.e. Moses], you are testing God." (Mekilta, ad loc., p. 173), Cf. Isa 7:10-12.

anointment with an especially prepared oil.[34] This, however, is not the case with the new prophet who may be chosen by his master. Although the term "to anoint" appears both in the Bible[35] and in the rabbinic writings[36] with reference to the inauguration of the new prophet, it must be taken as a mere figure of speech.[37] That this is the rabbinic view there can be no doubt, for whenever the rabbinic sources deal with the oil of anointment, it is stressed that "with it kings and high priests are anointed."[38] Interpreting the use of the plural in the verse, "The fragrance of your ointments is sweet" (Cant. 1:3), the rabbis state: "There are two oils: the oil of priesthood and the oil of royalty."[39] We are thus led to the

---

[34]BT Horayot 11b; BT Keritot 5b; PT Shekalim 6:1, p. 49c; PT Sota 8:3, p. 22c.

[35]1Kings 19:16; Isaiah 61:1; Psalms 105:5.

[36]"God showed Abraham how Moses anoints prophets." (Ex. R. 40:3). Other examples: Gen. R. 49:9, p. 512; Lev. R. 10:1, p. 197; 10:2, p. 199, and parallels; Yalk. Shim., II, 863.

[37]Cf. Rashi and Radak, ad loc., and Radak to 1Kings 19:15; cf. R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel, trans. J. McHugh (New York, Toronto and London, 1961), p. 104. But cf. J. Klausner, Ha-Ra'ayon ha-Meshihi be-Yisrael (3d ed.; Jerusalem, 1950), p. 6, n.1, who assumes that prophets were actually anointed. M. Friedmann, in his notes to his ed. of Pesikta R., p. 75a, n.92, also seems to take the anointment of the prophet literally.

[38]See references supra, note 32. The anointment of the holy vessels of the Tabernacle, as recorded in Ex. 30:22-29, was a unique act never to be repeated (BT Sanhedrin 16b).

[39]Cant. R., ad loc. Cf. Aramaic Targ. ad loc.; cf. Tan. va-yakhel, 1, where the verse, "A name is better than good oil" (Kohel. 7:1), is applied to the good name of the prophets and sages which is superior to good oil. No such contrast is likely unless the prophets were not anointed with oil.

conclusion that the installation of the new prophet was not accomplished by means of an anointment. It must have been done verbally, as is the procedure with ordination, which the rabbis have copied from the appointment of Joshuah, who was installed at one and the same time as ordained sage and as prophet.[40]

If a reason were needed for the exclusion of the prophet from the rite of anointment, we could find it in the rabbinic description of the miraculous nature of the oil of anointment. We are told that when it was poured indiscriminately in the midst of a company of pretenders, it ran of its own accord and fell upon the head of the rightful candidate.[41] This has application only to such offices as are held by only a single individual, as is the case with the high priesthood and kingship.[42] In these cases, the oil of anointment could single out the intended one.[43] But in the case of

---

[40]Cf. BT Sanhedrin 13b; PT Horayot 3:5, p. 47d. Moses' laying of the hands upon Joshua (Num. 27:18), is taken by the rabbis either figuratively (see Sifre, ad loc.), or if literally, as an adjunct in the bestowal of a special blessing (cf. Gen. 48:13-20) and not as an integral part of the ordination rite (Sifre Zuṭa, ad loc.).

[41]Yelamdenu, quoted in Yalḳ, Shim., II, 750; cf. ibid., 124.

[42]Cf. PT Sanhedrin 10:2, p. 29a.

[43]There is strong evidence in the Halakha in support of this concept. According to the Halakha, anointment is given only to a king who is either not of royal descent or to a king whose hereditary rights are contested by other hereditary rivals (BT Horayot 11b). This makes it patently clear that the underlying purpose of anointment is to allay doubts and settle disputes.

prophecy where there may be several prophets at the same time, the fact that the oil might direct itself to only one would not prove the other contenders false. That is why no oil of anointment is necessary for the installation of the prophet in office. In any case, whatever the reason may be, it appears that the oil of anointment is reserved exclusively for such offices as are held by a single person at a time, such as the high priesthood and the monarchy.

The call. - No particular importance is attached by the rabbis to the visionary and theophanic experience of the prophet in his divine call to office.[44] What is stressed in this first encounter is the prophet's reaction and response to this call. This reaction is deemed a worthy subject for close analysis and serves as a touchstone for judging the character of the prophet.

Because of the prophet's inexperience in communicating with the locution of God, certain accommodations on the part of God may be made to help cushion the impact which it was going to make on the neophyte prophet. We are told by the rabbis, for example, that when God first revealed Himself to Moses in the vision of the bush, He addressed him in his father's

---

[44]According to a rabbinic tradition, this first confrontation may be preceded by many preparatory visions of a lesser order in order to condition one for the prophetic vocation. This is what happened to Ezekiel: "If it will enter your mind that they [i.e. the prophets] see instantly, therefore it is written concerning Ezekiel: 'And I beheld divine visions' (Ezek. 1:1); thus Ezekiel said to them 'I have seen many seeings until I was privileged to face the Divine Presence.'" (Mekilta de RSBY to Ex. 20:5, p. 147).

voice so as not to overwhelm him.[45] This is akin to the case of Samuel who, when first receiving his prophecy, heard God's voice as that of his master Eli so that he twice thought it was Eli calling and not God.[46]

The accession to the call. - There is an oft-repeated rabbinic dictum: "One may refuse an unimportant person, but not an important person."[47] This rule, however, has application only with regard to a gift or any other personal benefit, but in accepting an honor or a responsibility, one is advised by a rabbinic maxim not to respond with an immediate "yes." When one is asked to serve as a precentor in prayer, he should at first refuse, at the second request should waver, and at the third should cheerfully accept.[48]

Prophecy being in the nature of a responsibility it should therefore follow that the prophet should show hesitation in accepting the call, and he should wait to be urged anew. The rabbis have, however, adopted a contrary view with regard

---

[45]Ex R. 3:1;45:5; cf. Leḳaḥ Ṭov to Ex. 3:6 where it is said that for this same reason, the angel of the Lord at first appeared to Moses in the image of his father.

[46]1Sam. 3:5-9; cf. BT Shabbat 113b where it is said that after Eli reassured Samuel that he did not call him, Samuel merely replied to the call with the words: "Speak, for Thy servant is listening' (1Sam 3:10), without saying: "Speak, O God," because he was not yet fully sure that it was God addressing him.

[47]BT Pesaḥim 86b, and parallels.

[48]BT Berakhot 34a; PT Berakhot 5:4, p. 9c. Cf. BT Horayot 10a, bottom.

to prophecy, throwing their very own prescription for good manners to the winds.[49]

Commenting on the verse, "The Lord God has opened my ear" (Isa. 50:5), the rabbis explain: "To hear His voice when He said 'whom shall I send" (Isa. 6:9), and He gave me good sense to say 'here I am send me' (ibid.); and 'I have not resisted' (Isa. 50:5)....because of it, I received more prophecies of weal than all other prophets."[50] Similarly, praise is given to Elisha for his immediate decision to accept the call.[51] Furthermore, Moses is severely censured for his dilatory tactics in accepting his mission.[52] Even his first refusal was considered a sin, but God gave him two more opportunities to recant, to make up the usual three chances which God affords every sinner.[53] Moses was told that he de-

---

[49]The controversy as to whether it was a commendable gesture on the part of Moses to hide his face upon first seeing the divine manifestation in the burning bush (Ex. 3:6), or was it a blameworthy act (BT Berakhot 7a), has no bearing on the question under consideration as it does not deal at all with an accession or response to a prophetic call. It concerns itself with the problem of whether one should take immediate and full advantage of the intimacy of a divine manifestation or would it be a sign of presumptuousness not to act with restraint and coyness. Cf. Lev. R. 20:10, p.466, where it is clear that it is a matter of showing respect by not gloating in viewing a divine display.

[50]Pesiḳ. R. 33, p.151; Yalḳ. Shim., II, 406; cf. Seder Eliahu R., chap. 16(17), p. 82; and cf. Lev. R. 10:2, p. 198.

[51]1Kings 19:20; Seder Eliahu R. chap. 5 pp. 22,23.

[52]There is an opinion that his refusal was out of deference to his older brother Aaron,whose established rights as a practising prophet he was loath to usurp; nonetheless, God was highly displeased with his hesitations and waverings (Ex.R.3:21).

[53]Ex. R. 7:2; cf. Tan., Buber, va-ethanan,6, p. 11. It seems that Moses' erstwhile hesitation, "who am I that I should go" (Ex. 3:11), is not condemned by the rabbis as meriting censure, but neither is he commended for it. See Ex. R., ad loc.

served to be caned,[54] and because of it, he forfeited his title to the priesthood.[55]

It becomes evident that the rabbis do not regard the prophetic vocation in the same way as any other office of responsibility, which must be accepted with well-mannered hesitation. Not even for appearance's sake is prophecy to be taken as a task to be accepted with courteously feigned reluctance. It must be accepted as the fulfilment of a mitzvah not only with solemnity of purpose but with cheerful readiness. Doing God's will in assuming a prophetic mission is in no wise different from doing the will of God represented by the performance of any scriptural commandment. Prophecy is, in fact, subsumed under the heading of "accepting the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven"[56] under which many of the commandments are classed such as, for example, the recitation of the Shema.[57] Judged from this vantage point, the accession to the prophetic office cannot be approached with coyness and a show of good manners, just as the fulfilment of any mitzvah is not to be executed with an attitude of an assumed unworthiness and with feigned hesitation.[58]

---

[54]Mid. Avkir, quoted in Yalḳ. Shim., I, 171.

[55]Ex. R. 3:21.

[56]Seder Eliahu R., chap. 16(17), p. 82; cf. M. Kadushin, The Theology of Seder Eliahu (New York, 1932), p. 61.

[57]BT Berakhot 14b, 15a.

[58]Cf., for example, Yehuda b. Tema's statement in Mishan Aboth 5:23. A. Heschel views the prophet's unwillingness to assume the prophetic task as commendable. According to him, "The prophet does not receive the inspired word because

The prophet's changed appearance. - The rabbis, guided in all likelihood by the recorded case of Moses, the prototype of all prophets, whose face, as a result of his close association with God, acquired a radiant glow which inspired awe in those who gazed upon him (Ex 34:29,30), ascribed similar effects to all other prophets.[59] This is depicted in the rabbinic metaphor: "The face of Moses was like the face of the sun; the face of Joshuah was like the face of the moon."[60] It should be noted that while in the case of Moses and certain other prophets this radiant glow lasted all their lives without interruption,[61] most other prophets possessed their respective

---

he wills it...but because he must...This is a true sign for the prophet that the word does not come from the heart" (Die Prophetie, p.123). He reiterates this view in his God In Search of Man, p. 224: "Revelation occurred against the will of the prophet... When called, the prophet recoiled, resisted and pleaded to be left alone... Is not this experience of resistance...a mark of truthfulness, authenticity...?" The rabbis, however, do not seem to share this view. To them, the prophet was not particularly in need of such psychologically sophisticated signs, for the prophetic experience brought with it its own methods of convincement.

[59] To a lesser or larger degree, this divine radiance is imparted to anyone who is associated or is in contact with any divine manifestation. Cf. Kohel. R. 8:3; PSRK, 4, p. 37a.

[60] BT Baba Batra 75a.

[61] Moses had to wear a veil over his face to shield this radiance (Ex. 29:35). There was a visible pillar of cloud hanging over Samuel's abode by which the ladies pointed out his residence to Saul (PSRK, 4, p. 38b; cf. Sifre Zuṭa to Num. 11:5, p. 275, and cf. Gen. R. 60; end, p. 656). Elisha's radiance was of such fierceness that "a woman could not gaze at his face without dying" (PRE, chap. 33).

glow only for the duration of their seizure by the Holy Spirit, and not in their private life.

This is revealed in several rabbinic statements. "While the prophets were on their divine mission, the Holy Spirit which rested on them would inspire fear in the eyes of all those who saw them."[62] It is said of Phineas, "Whenever the Holy Spirit rested on him, his face would blaze like fiery lamps."[63] A similar description is given of Moses in his early stages: "Formerly, Moses would stand and the Locution would enter his ear like a jet stream, and no Israelite heard, but when his face glowed, all realized the Locution was with him."[64]

Thus, the effect of the Holy Spirit relating to prophecy is described in terms of a fiery and glowing countenance. Such a countenance will inspire the onlookers with trepidation, which in the case of Elisha is described as deadly in power,[65] something akin to the mortal fright which the Israelites experienced at the giving of the Ten Commandments, which was attended by divine visions (Ex. 20:15,16).

---

[62]Num. R. 10:14.

[63]Lev. R. 1:1, p. 3; cf. ibid. 21; end, p. 493, where this changed appearance is of such magnitude that it transmutes its possessor for this duration into a superior being, which removes him from the realm of man.

[64]Num. R. 12:1.

[65]PRE, chap. 33.

In this connection note should be taken that the Holy Spirit relating to heroic deeds also brings about a visible physical change in the one who is under its influence. The effects may not be the same as those of the prophet's radiant glow, but the divine hero moved by the Holy Spirit is possessed of a special hallmark which is representative of his newly-gained power. Expatiating on the verse regarding Samson: "The spirit of the Lord began to ring in him...between Zorah and Eshtaol" (Jud. 13:25), the rabbis state: "When the Holy Spirit rested on him, his hair stood up and knocked one against another like a bell, and their sound extended from Zorah to Eshtaol."[66] This appears to be characteristic only of Samson since he was a Nazir, and in consequence, his power inhered in his hair, whereas the other divine heroes, the so-called Judges, will logically be affected by other physical changes in accordance with the character of their mission. A change of a sort there must take place, for such is the case, in the rabbinic view, of all individuals who partake of any intimacy with the Divine.

No retroactive impeachment. - It is to the greater glory of the rabbis that they never considered the prophet a kind of super-being, incapable of corruption, while at the same time they held fast to the validation criteria for the authentication of the true prophet, regardless of what might subsequently happen to his credence. Consequently, even after a prophet

---

[66]PT Soṭa 1:8, p. 17b; Lev. R. 8:2, p. 168.

palpably changed into a false prophet, by prophesying the worship of idols, his original standing remains unimpaired, and whatever prophecies he may have delivered prior to that fateful moment are to be maintained as the genuine word of God. That no one is to be suspected and discredited retroactively is a well-established rabbinic principle,[67] widely applicable, and prophecy was thus not made into an exception. That prophecy is no exception is clearly stated in a rabbinic comment on the verse, "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or unto that dreamer of dream(s)" (Deut. 13:4), which reads : "But he is not suspected retroactively."[68]

There is one such case on record, of a true prophet turning into a false one. According to a rabbinic tradition, "Ḥananiah b. Azur was originally a true prophet but in the end he became a false prophet. As he saw that the Holy Spirit departed from him, he would steal words from Jeremiah..."[69] But this is a case of a non-writing prophet. However, the validity of this principle manifests itself even more cogently in the case of Solomon, who was a writing prophet. There was a time when the rabbis were considering the exclusion of his book

---

[67] Tosefta, Bekhorot 3:5. Cf. Shulhan Arukh, yore de'ah, 1:1, and Siftei Kohen, ad loc.

[68] Sifre, ad loc.; Yalk. Shim., I, 885, and see Zeit Ra'anan, ad loc. Undoubtedly, this rabbinic comment presupposes the translation of this verse as follows: Thou shalt not hearken ...unto the dreamer of that dream.

[69] PT Sanhedrin 11:7, p. 30b; Mid. Tannaim, Hoffmann, to Deut. 13:3; cf. Rashi to Hosea 9:7, where he applies the verse, "The prophet is a fool, the man of spirit is crazed," to Ḥananiah b. Azur.

Kohelet from the canon because some of its words "tend to be heretical."[70] While this heresy of Kohelet was being discussed as a serious possibility, no doubt was cast on account of it on the other books of the same author, which testifies to the rabbinic adherence to the principle of no retroactive condemnation.

In fact, this principle was carried to the extreme case whereby a prophet may be condemned to eternal perdition as a heinous sinner, yet his prophecies delivered prior to his sinning will be kept as valid. This, too, is exemplified by the case of Solomon, whose name was seriously considered for addition to the list of kings having forfeited their share in the hereafter.[71] Despite the possibility of such a final and fateful verdict, his books were not in danger of being removed from the canon since apparently his sins were committed in his latter days (1Kings 11:4), subsequent to the composition of the books, these being, therefore, beyond the influence of any transformation in their author.

It is not at all unreasonable to cite the prophecy of Balaam recorded in the Pentateuch (Num. 23:5 etc.) as an

---

[70]Lev. R. 28:1; Kohel. R. 1:4; cf. BT Shabbat 30b; ADRN, 4. See Cant. R. 1:10 that Kohelet was his last book.

[71]BT Sanhedrin 104b; PT Sanhedrin 10:2, p. 29b.

additional case in point. This prophecy retains its validity despite the fact that its original author turned into a wicked person finally doomed to eternal perdition.[72] It makes good sense so long as we hold fast to the validation criteria and to the principle of no retroactive disqualification no matter what may happen to the prophet subsequently.

---

[72]Mishna Sanhedrin 10:2; BT Gittin 57a; BT Sanhedrin 106a; Num. R. 20:7; Tan., Buber, balak 17, p. 142. The famous rabbinic passage: "Moses wrote his book [i.e. the Pentateuch] and the section of Balaam" (BT Baba Batra 14b; cf. PT Sota 5; end, p. 20d), does not refute our contention. It does not touch on the validity of Balaam's prophecy, which is indeed taken for granted; it merely concerns itself with the problem of how this prophecy became an integral part of the Pentateuch, whose mode of revelation is of a higher order than that of ordinary prophecy which is why Balaam's oracle required the reinforcement of the prophetic quality of Moses for its inclusion in the Pentateuch.

The suggestion of R. Isaiah Hurwitz taken up by J. Z. Lauterbach (Rabbinic Essays, p. 507, note 109) that the "section of Balaam" which, according to the rabbis, was written by Moses "refers to...a separate story about Balaam and not to the account in Numbers," lacks sufficient proof. Although this interpretation was recorded much earlier by R. Yom Tov of Seville in his commentary on BT Baba Batra, 15a (published in 1951 by M. Y. Blau from manuscript), it is not shared by most classical Talmudic commentators. The fact that the Talmud makes use of the term the "section of Balaam" rather than the "book of Balaam" or the like, strongly indicates that it has reference to the account in the Pentateuch and not to a separate account.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PROPHETISM

Knowing the unknown. - It has been in vogue for a considerable while to circumscribe the confines of the prophetic knowledge of the unknown. A strenuous effort has been made to reduce the predictive capacity of prophecy to such events as have their seeds and roots in the spiritual or material reality of the present, from whence they stem and ultimately become apparent.[1] To lend charm to this view, a rather attractive quip which soon gained wide currency was called into being: the prophet does not foretell, he forthtells![2] In this way, the fore-knowledge of the prophet is more in the nature of a medical prognosis than of predicting per se.

This view, however, has lost its charm of late and has been forced to yield ground.[3] The rabbis for their part always

---

[1]Cf. H. Knight, The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness (london, 1947), p. 171, where he states: "He [i.e. the prophet] foretells because he is able to transcend time, because he realizes that history is a drama which primarily and fundamentally takes place in eternity." Cf. Also H. TH. Obbink, "The Forms of Prophetism", HUCA XIV (1939), 27, who asserts: "They [i.e. the prophets] do not predict so much what will happen but rather what must happen as the consequence of the conduct of the people." Cf. H. Ringgren, Israelitische Religion (Stuttgart, 1963), p. 236.

[2]For the source of this quip, see H. H. Rowley, The Servant of the Lord (London, 1954), p. 125; cf. C. Kuhl, "The Prophets of Israel: (Eng. trans.), p. 3; R. Gordis, A. Faith For Moderns (New York, 1960), p. 142.
In French it has been rendered by E. Goldstein-Weiss, "L'Objet de Prophetisme," La Revue Litteraire Juive, II (1928), 1001, as follows: Les Prophetes etaient des predicateurs et non des predicteurs.

[3]Cf. H. H. Rowley, "The Nature of Prophecy in the Light

considered the prophet's knowledge of the unknown, past, present or future, as an integral part of the prophetic vocation. In their own words: "The prophet informs the Jews of whatever is hidden in the holes and in the cracks."[4] According to the rabbis, Abraham was first called a prophet (Gen. 20:7) as a reply to the purported inquiry of Abimelech as to who would convince Abraham that Abimelech was not intimate with Sarah. Thus God told Abimelech that Abraham, being a prophet, would know the truth.[5]

It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Israelites knew the exact thoughts present in Pharaoh's mind when he pursued them to the Red Sea.[6] That is also how Deborah knew what Sissera's mother was saying inethe privacy of her home.[7] Before Elisha cursed the boys who abused him, it is said that "he looked at them" (2 Kings 2:24), which the rabbis interpret to mean that he saw they had been conceived in sin, and that neither they nor their progeny would possess any merit whatever.[8]

---

of Recent Study." HTR XXXVIII(1945), 35, "Nor do I share the view which has long been all too common that prediction is not a mark of prophecy... For the prophets were continually predicting the future." Also cf. T. H. Robinson, Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel (New York, 1923), p. 46, who takes a middle-of-the-road view: "Prediction, though one of their functions, was accidental and not fundamental."

[4]BT Yoma 75a; Mekilta de RSBY to Ex. 16:31, p. 115; Mekilta, va-yassa, 5, p. 171.

[5]Gen. R. 52:10.

[6]Mekilta, shirah, 7, p. 139.

[7]Sifre, Num., 88.

[8]BT Sota 46b.

It was precisely the element of foreseeing the future, which the rabbis found in the song of Hannah, and not so much the superior quality of the song itself, which induced them to rank her as one of the seven prophetesses.[9] Similarly, Abigail, too, was made into a prophetess because she foresaw David's sin with Bathsheba.[10]

Hence, it is not at all surprising that whenever any sage revealed something unknown or foretold a future event, he evoked the ever recurring query: "But are you a prophet?"[11] Such and similar expressions[12] which are woven in the texture of rabbinic parlance are a forceful demonstration of the intimate link in the rabbinic mind between predictiveness and prophetism.

This far-reaching power of the prophet to know the innermost recesses of the unknown is not to be construed as an innate faculty or as an endowment given once only. Neither is it a natural by-product, nor is it a permanent residual effect of the prophet's close association with God. It is simply one of the direct aspects of the workings

---

[9]BT Megillah 14a.

[10]Ibid. 14b.

[11]BT Berakhot 34b; BT Erubin 63a, and parallels; BT Yebamot 121b, and parallels.

[12]Cf. BT Erubin 60b; BT Baba Batra 12a; BT Berkhorot 45a; BT Pesahim 9b,66b.

of the Holy Spirit as it affects the prophet when he is seized with it.[13] This is poignantly brought out with regard to Samuel: "Even though Samuel was a prophet, he knew nothing until God informed him."[14] Thus, it is not the prophet who can see by virtue of his prophetic faculties, but it is God who communicates it to him directly or by way of the Holy Spirit which he bestows upon him each time anew. Hence, a prophet's ignorance of something is described not as a personal shortcoming or failure, but as Elisha put it: "The Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me" (2 Kings 4:27).[15]

---

[13] Cf. Y. Kaufman, op. cit., V. I, pp. 513-520.

[14] Mid. Ps. 119:9 inferring from 1Sam. 9:15. This holds equally true for all prophets. Cf. "All comes from God, if He wills it, men see, and if He wills it, men hear, as it is written: 'The hearing ear and the seeing eye, both of them alike the Lord has created (Prov. 20:12)." - Agg. Beresh. chap. 70; cf. Tan., Buber, miḳetz, 5, p. 192.

[15] Cf. "Said the prophet [i.e. Elisha]: Everything that God does, He informs me except for this one" (PRE, chap. 33). It should be noted that it is possible for the prophet not to be informed of certain things unknown, yet the people must have faith in the knowledge of the prophet, and they must treat him as if he knows everything. When Isaiah came to Hezekiah to ask him: "What did those men say, and from where have they come?" (Isa. 39:3), the rabbis severely censure Hezekiah for not responding: "You are the prophet of the Omnipresent, why do you ask me?" (Num. R. 20:6; cf. Gen. R. 19:11, p. 180). In the medieval commentary, Da'at Zekeinim to Num. 22:9, Hezekiah's guilt is questioned in view of the fact that "the prophets do not know everything." Because of this difficulty a drastic emendation in the midrashic text is suggested. But the text stands in no need of emendation because, as said, regardless of the limited knowledge of the prophet, Hezekiah as a matter of respect for the prophetic vocation had to display greater faith and not treat the prophet as if he were an ordinary person.

It was considered pathetically presumptuous of Samuel to have said: "I am the seer" (1 Sam. 9:19) because no matter how innocently it was meant, it nevertheless carried with it the implied assumption that he was permanently invested with such faculty to be used at his discretion whenever he saw fit. As a penalty for such a connotation, Samuel was later on exposed to the embarrassment of wrongly identifying Eliab as the king-to-be.[16]

Furthermore, such a fate is dealt to the prophet not only as a penalty for the sin of having once thought of himself as a prophetic being, but more often in anticipation, as a preventive measure to forestall the possibility of such a misconception. This idea is aptly used by the rabbis to explain the puzzling fact that Jacob, who was a prophet, did not know for the longest time the whereabouts of his son Joseph.

> Twenty-two years that Joseph spent in Egypt away from his father, the Holy Spirit was taken away from Jacob and his sons...and they did not know that he was in Egypt even though ... Jacob and his sons were heretofore great prophets... Why thus? In order that the prophets should not become boastful; therefore...He showed them that they are nothing.17

However, there is a fundamental difference between

---

[16] Sifre to Deut. 1:17; Tan., Buber, miketz, 6, p. 192; but cf. Yalk. Shim., II, 124.

[17] Tan., Buber, miketz, 6, p. 192; Agg. Beresh., chap. 70; cf. Gen. R. 91:1.

prophecy as such and the prophet's knowledge of the unknown. Their respective manner of reception is different. While we cannot know how the prophet received his oracle, he receives it as a revelation directly communicated to him, as the prophets always report it in terms of an express message given to them, to be delivered to the one intended.[18] But the knowledge of the unknown may come at times to the prophet as an added power of the workings of the Holy Spirit while he is under its influence. The prophet does not in this case experience a Locution, he merely receives the power of clairvoyance of a sort.

All in all, the prophet's knowledge comes each time either by way of an express revelation from God, or by virtue of a power granted to him by the will of God for a particular instance, and does not flow automatically from his person, neither by virtue of his inherent prophetic endowments nor by virtue of a unique act of Grace.[19]

---

[18]Cf. C. Kuhl, op. cit., p. 17.

[19]This is especially true regarding knowledge of future events. Perhaps this is what is meant by "There is no prophet in the world who will know what will happen to man" (Targ. to Kohel. 9:1). In this connection it is worth pointing out the rather mystifying rabbinic passage: "Let anyone who questions God's knowledge of the future consider [the case of] flesh and blood [i.e. Samuel]. If he [i.e. Samuel], when the Divine Presence was upon him, was able to tell Saul what will happen to him, the Holy One, blessed be He, all the more so. (Yelamdenu, va-yelekh, Sefer ha-Likutim, Gruenhut, p. 162). This paradoxical turning of tables, proving God's foreknowledge from the predictive power of the prophet, was probably necessitated by the long-standing problem of how to maintain the tenet of divine foreknowledge in the face of the apparently contradictory tenet of human free will. This antinomy was already articulated by R. Akiba: "All is foreseen, yet permission is granted!" (Mishna Aboth 3:15). Cf. BT Sanhedrin 90b, where proof is sought for divine foreknowledge.

The divine locution. - With the exception of Moses, who is in a class by himself, the prophet receives a locution from God, but God does not speak to him. Interpreting the verse, "And I will put my words in his [i.e. the prophet's] mouth" (Deut. 18:18), the rabbis conclude: "In his mouth I put the words, but I do not speak with him face to face. From here know ye how the Holy Spirit is put in the mouths of the prophets."[20] Thus, despite the fact the prophet may experience divine visions of all kinds, there is no sensation on his part that the oracle is being formulated and spoken to him by a Being directly facing him, even though he is experiencing the reality of a spoken message.

It is for this reason that the introductory formula "And God spoke to...," which is so common in the Pentateuch, is nowhere to be found in the Prophets,[21] for no prophet was

---

[20]Sifre, ad loc., p. 221; cf. Sifre to Num. 12:8, p. 101.

[21]However, the phrase "and God said to..." is employed by the prophets, e.g. Jer. 1:7, because "speaking" implies the very act of articulating, of directness of address, whereas "saying" has the connotation of merely conveying a message, of making something known to someone.

It is true that we find in 1Chron. 21:9 "And God spoke to Gad the seer of David," but as Malbim to Sifra, va-yikra, 4, pointedly noted that its very corresponding verse in 2Sam. 24:11 has it "And God's word happened to Gad the seer of David," which proves that the Locution was really mediated to Gad, perhaps through an angel. That a mediated prophecy may at times be recorded as "God spoke to..." can be seen from Targum J. To Isa. 7:10. Cf. also the verse: "And God spoke to Manasseh and his people" (2Chron. 33:10), where it is self-evident that it came to Manasseh by way of an intermediary agent. For Manasseh, a most iniquitous king, could not be worthy of prophecy, nor was it possible for the entire people in his day to receive a revelation, something which has not happened since the giving of the Ten Commandments. According to the rabbis, it was given to

so presumptuous as to claim such directly addressed speech from God. The rabbis see this essential distinction between Moses and the other prophets in the opening verse of Leviticus "And He called unto Moses and God spoke to him." This generated the following discussion:

> But has not God spoken to Noah: 'and God spoke to Noah' (Gen. 8:15) There is no degradation in speaking with one's pilot!...But has not God spoken to Abraham: 'And Abraham fell on his face, and He spoke with him' (Gen. 17:3) There is no degradation in speaking with one's innkeeper.22

It becomes patently clear that qua prophet only Moses enjoyed direct interpersonal communication with God. Even though Noah and Abraham had a similar experience, it was not in a prophetic capacity. Noah had it in his capacity of God's pilot, having taken charge of the Ark, and Abraham in his capacity of God's innkeeper, having fed the wayfarers. Noah's and Abraham's intimacy was not a result of their inordinate prophetic state, but it issued from their having been God's

---

Manasseh and his people through a prophet (Seder Olam R., chap. 20; cf. 2Chron. 33:18). For other such instances, cf. PT Soṭa 7:1, p. 21b, and parallels; 1Kings 11:11, and Seder Olam R., chap. 20; Gen. 16:9-11,13; cf. Gersonides to 2Sam. 24:1; Nachmanides to Lev. 10:3. Perhaps this may be one of the reasons why the rabbis in interpreting the frequently recurring phrase, "For the mouth of the Lord has spoken," e.g. Isa. 1:20, have it refer to a verse in the Pentateuch upon which the prophetic message is based, because direct divine speaking has been heard only by Moses (Mekilta, pisḥa, 12, p. 40). Cf. A. Kaminka, Mehḳarim (Tel-Aviv, 1938), V. I, pp. 159ff.

[22]Lev. R. 1:9, p. 23; and cf. PT Soṭa 7:1, p. 21b, where it is claimed that direct divine speech was not addressed to any woman except to Sarah.

stewards of a sort, and this intimacy is akin to the one which finds its formulation in the well-known saying: No man is a hero to his valet!

There is one exception in one instance with regard to Joshua where it is written, "And God spoke to Joshua" (Josh. 20:1), which prompted the rabbis' query as to why it was expressed in "strong language." The solution which the rabbis offer is that since this particular section is merely a restatement of a Torah law, the law concerning the cities of asylum, it is given in the same manner as all the Torah laws.[23]

The Sanctuary as the prophetic transmitter. - Although the rabbis never considered the prophet as in any wise attached to a sanctuary,[24]

---

[23]BT Makkot 10b.

[24]There is a rabbinic interpretation of the verse "...and liquids from Lebanon" (Cant. 4:15), which reads: "These are the prophets who stood in the Temple" (Shir ha-Shirim Zuṭa, ad loc., Buber, p. 32). Lebanon, in rabbinic exegesis, stands for the Temple, see Targ. O. and Targ. J. to Deut. 3:25, and Sifre, ad loc. It is not to be inferred from this passage that the prophets were Temple adjuncts. On the surface it seems to have reference to the fact that the prophets seeking large audiences took advantage of the overflowing crowds in the Temple courtyards to deliver there their prophecies (Cf. Jer. 19:14; 26:2; 2Chron. 24:20,21). It is also not too remote to suggest that this passage may refer to what we shall show further on in this discussion that regardless of where the prophet may find himself he will receive his prophecy via the channel of the Temple.

Neither were sacrifices used as a devise for inducing prophecy, and they were certainly not used by the prophets as a means of divination in the manner of the Baru (cf. Ez. 21:27). Although we find a comment in a late midrashic work on the verse "And he [i.e. Jacob] offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac" (Gen. 46:1), which states: "He sacrificed so that God would inform him whether he should go down to Egypt" (Bereshit Rabbati, Albek, ad loc., p. 221; cf. Lekah Ṭov, ad loc.), it was not meant as a means of inducement, but rather as a form of petitioning in the manner of praying.

nevertheless it was the sanctuary which acted as a medium through which the oracle was channelled to him. It was not at all necessary for the prophet to be physically present within the sanctuary's precincts in order for him to receive his prophecy. Yet, no matter where he might have been found at the time when the prophecy reached him, he had the experience that the Locution was arriving to him via the medium of the Sanctuary.

This view finds its source in the etymology of the name "Debir" given to the Holy of Holies, which the rabbis connect with the root DBR, to speak. To them, the "Debir" is so called because "from there issue the Locutions to the world."[25]

In the same manner as Moses "heard the Voice speaking unto him from above the ark covering...from between the cherubim" (Num. 7:89), so all other prophets, according to a rabbinic tradition, heard the Locution come to them from between the cherubim. "When there was a will from before Him to make the Locution heard to his servants, the prophets of Israel, the Voice was heard from above the heaven, from between the cherubim beneath the heaven..."[26]

---

[25]PT Berakhot 4:5, p. 8c; Gen.R.55:7, p.59. Cf. "From there the Holy Spirit is drawn" (PT Sukkah 5:1, p. 55a, and parallels). Cf. PSRK, ed. Mandelbaum, p. 230, and ed. note 10.

[26]Targ. J. to Ez. 1:25; cf. Targ. J. to 1Sam. 3:3; Isa. 6:6;24:16; cf. Targ. to Ps. 60:8, 108:8. Cf. R. de Vaux Ancient Israel (Eng. trans.), p.326; A. J. Heschel, Torah Min ha-Shamayim (New York & London, 1962), p. 64, and n.23.

What makes this view even more absolute is the fact that even before there was yet a sanctuary, at the time of the giving of the Ten Commandments, God spoke to Moses by way of the chosen sanctuary-to-be. Commenting on the verse: "And the people stood from afar, but Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was" (Ex. 20:18), the rabbis state: "From the chosen house [i.e. the Temple] He spoke with him, as it is written, 'And he saw the place from afar' (Gen. 22:4)."[27] Thus the phrase "from afar" which Abraham used to describe Mt. Moriah in Gen. 22:4, denotes the same "from afar" from where God spoke with Moses at the time of the giving of the Ten Commandments, that is, from Mt. Moriah.

A most convincing demonstration of the instrumentality of the Sanctuary in the transmission of prophecy can be seen from the rabbinic passage which reports that the Second Temple lacked five things which were present in the First Temple, one of which is the Holy Spirit, that is, prophecy.[28] Were we to consider prophecy to be wholly detached from the Sanctuary, it would be altogether improper and meaningless to list its absence together with that of such objects as the ark, the heavenly fire, the Divine Presence and the Urim and Tumim, which properly belong to the Sanctuary but were not present in the Second Temple. It makes sense to include prophecy as one of the five elements, lacking in the Second Temple, only if we consider the Temple as the instrumentality for the transmission of prophecy.

---

[27]Yalḳ. Shim., I, 301. Cf. Mid. Ps. 68:9.

[28]BT Yoma 21b, and parallels.

Strength of the Locution. - From the verse, "And he [i.e. Moses] heard the voice" (Num. 7:89), the rabbis infer that the Locution comes to the prophet with a powerful sensation of sound because the use of the definite article, "the voice," makes it refer to a voice mentioned elsewhere (Duet. 5:19; Ps. 29:4), wherein it is described as being of immense strength.[29] Consequently, the rabbis are faced with a contradictory verse wherein the Locution to Elijah is termed "a voice of gentle stillness" (1Kings 19:13). To resolve this difficulty, two different solutions are offered.

Rabbi Josiah reinterprets the last verse to mean a voice uttered in an atmosphere of gentle stillness, free from interference of all diversionary and disruptive noises, although the voice itself came with the overwhelming power due to a divine locution. Rabbi Jonathan agrees with Rabbi Josiah that the unmediated locution emanating from God comes through with a powerful auditory sensation, but he claims that the verse concerning Elijah has reference to the mediated locution, one conveyed through an angel, which he interprets to read as coming in a gentle whisper, hardly audible.[30] As a footnote

---

[29]Sifre to Num. 7:89; p. 56; Num. R. 14:35.

[30]Sifre, loc. cit.; cf. Ex. R. 28: end. The prophecy of Moses was never mediated through an angel, cf. Sifre Zuṭa to Num. 11:8.

to this discussion, it is worth pointing out that according to this view, the prophet has at his disposal a reliable gauge by which to ascertain whether he is in receipt of a direct Divine Locution or merely a mediated one.[31]

The formulation of the oracle. - It has been a problem of long standing whether the prophet delivers the oracle in the ipsissima verba of God, or he sets the divine message to words of his own choosing.[32] Because of philosophical-theological considerations and on the strength of internal indications of the prophetic texts, many are of the opinion that all that the prophet is given is an idea, a thought which he is to relate in his words. The prophet is not "a mail-carrier delivering a sealed letter," but he has an active part in its formulation.[33] He reasons out the revelation, he reflects upon its significance, and he brings these to bear on the discovery and delivery of the message.[34] Heschel tones this view down by describing the delivered oracles as "illustrations, not photographs."[35] The fundamentalists, however, assert that the prophecies of the

---

[31]Regarding the nature of the auditory element in the prophetic experience, see C. H. Brockington, "Audition in the O. T.," Journal of Theol. Studies, XLIX, 1-8.

[32]See P. E. Kretzman, "Modern Views About Inspiration and the Truth of Scriptures," Princeton Theol. Review, XXVII, 232. H.H.Rowley, ed., The O. T. and Modern Study (Oxford, 1951), p.351.

[33]H. TH. Obbink, "The Forms of Prophetism", HUCA, XIV (1939), 26; cf. Ibn Ezra to Ex. 11:5; Yesod Mora, chap. 1.

[34]J. Skinner, Prophecy and Religion (Cambridge,1922),p.220.

[35]God In Search of Man, pp. 259, 266.

writing prophets, which are of timeless value and must constantly yield new meaning for every generation to come, of necessity must be given by God in a carefully-finished form so that each word may be pregnant with sufficient implications to satisfy the needs of countless generations.[36]

There are opinions somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. In these, the prophet is to be compared neither to a plain mirror which indiscriminately reflects whatever is cast upon it, nor to a poet who hews out and creates his own imageries and phraseologies to describe his experiences and impressions. The prophet is likened to a prism which separates the various hues contained in a ray of light, or perhaps "to a piece of colored glass where the light is modified by it.... That word [of God] was everywhere marked by the experience, outlook and personality of the prophet through whom it was given."[37]

The rabbinic view. - Not much can be derived from the oft-quoted rabbinic dictum: "One form [of prophecy] is obtained by many prophets, yet no two prophets prophesy in the same form."[38] On the surface it would appear as if the rabbis endorse the view that the prophet employs his own choice of words. However, it may just as well mean that it is God who may

---

[36] M. Ch. Luzzato, Derekh ha-Hayyim, part 3, chap. 4; cf. R. Nissim Gerondi, Derashot ha-Ran, No. 5; cf. Rashi to Isa. 5:7, end; cf. Kuzari, part 5, 20.

[37] H. H. Rowley, The Servant of the Lord, p. 120.

[38] BT Sanhedrin 89a.

give the same prophecy to several prophets, yet will give it to each one in a different form to suit the personal style of the recipient prophet. In fact, the rabbis make provisions for just such a possibility in their dictum: "According to the ability of each one would the divine locution speak to him."[39] Furthermore, the very same prophecy may contain many elements with each prophet selecting and absorbing only what appertains to him. This is impressively illustrated in the rabbinic account of what took place when God appeared to Moses in Midian: "The Locution split in two voices and became duo-faced; in Midian Moses heard 'Go, return to Egypt' (Ex. 4:19), but in Egypt Aaron heard 'Go to meet Moses in the wilderness' (Ex. 4:27), while those in between heard nothing."[40]

However, the divergence in the style of the various prophets does not issue only from the fact that the oracle, to begin with, is given to each one in his own idiom, but it may also be the result of the right of the prophet to supply his own choice of words. The fact that the rabbis make allowance for a prophet to prophesy in the name of God even such a message as has been deduced by logical inference from an existing prophecy,[41] is clear proof that they

---

[39]PSRK, 12, p. 110a, and parallels. Cf. I. Heinemann, Darkei ha-Aggada, pp. 55, 57.

[40]Tan., Buber, shemot, 23, p. 14; Ex. R. 5:9.

[41]BT Sanhedrin 89a.

do not require that a prophecy represent the ipsissima verba of God. This is indeed contained in the very name Nabi, which is sometimes translated by the rabbis into the Aramaic "meturgeman"[42] or "Amora."[43] Both these terms are employed in Aramaic to denote interpreters who need not translate everything verbatim. In fact, the terms describe the position held in the Talmudic times by those delivering the lecture which the head of the academy would whisper in their ear and which they, in turn, would deliver aloud in their own words.[44]

It should thus be evident that the prophet is not a mere repeater of words, but may color his prophecy with his own words and enliven it with his own enthusiasm. Only on such ground could the rabbis feel secure in their bold contrasting of the theophany of Ezekiel with that of Isaiah. Ezekiel is compared to a villager who, upon seeing the king, becomes so overtaken that he describes his experience in the most detailed and glowing terms. Isaiah, on the other hand, is

---

[42]Targ. O. to Ex. 7:1; cf. ibid. 4:16; cf. PT Soṭa 7:1, p. 21b; Mekilta de RSBY, p. 6.

[43]Ex. R. 8;end.

[44]Cf. BT Soṭa 40a; BT Yoma 20b; BT Ḥullin 15a; Tosef., Megillah, end. See S. Lieberman Tosefta Ki-fshuṭa, order Mo'ed, p. 1223; but cf. E. Z. Melamed, Mavo le-Safrut ha-Talmud (Jerusalem, 1954), p. 74. Similarly, the "meturgeman" who interpreted into Aramaic the public reading from the Bible was permitted to amplify. Cf. "He who interprets a verse literally, is a liar, but he who adds, is a blasphemer" (Tosef., Megillah, end; BT Ḳiddushin 49a). Thus, the "meturgeman" had to tread the difficult path of amplifying without introducing additions which might corrupt the intent of the verse. Cf. E. Bass, op. cit., p. 21, where he misconstrues the import of the use of this term with regard to prophecy.

likened to a city dweller who is inured to the sight of the king, and whose account of it will be less detailed as a result. Thus, the very same vision, or in the words of the rabbis: "Whatever Ezekiel saw, Isaiah saw," may be reported in two widely divergent manners.[45]

That the prophet may supply his own illustrative similes is apparent from the rabbinic observation: "Because Moses loved the Jews, he compared them to stars; Balaam who was their enemy compared them to dust; but Hosea who was in between, neither a lover nor an enemy, compared them to sand."[46] Here we have a concrete example of three prophets who were in receipt of an apparently identical oracle, the multiplicity of the Jewish people, and yet each one of them made use of a distinctly different illustration to describe it. The rabbis have gone to the extreme in differentiating "the curses" recorded in Leviticus (26: 14-45) from those recorded in Deuteronomy (28: 15-69). The former "Moses said them from the mouth of the Power [i.e. God] ," whereas the latter "Moses said them from his own mouth."[47] What the rabbis are implying is not that the curses contained in Deuteronomy are not of divine origin, but that the wording of these curses has been supplied

---

[45] BT Ḥagigah 13b; cf. Tan., tzav, 13.

[46] Ex. R. 2:17, and parallels; cf. Yelamdenu to Num. 24:17, quoted in Yalḳ. Shim., I, 771. Cf. Lev. R. 26:7, p. 605, where it is stated that because of expediency, Samuel delivered the same prophesy in two different forms; cf. Mid. Ps. 57:3.

[47] BT Megillah 31b.

by Moses in contradistinction to the curses contained in Leviticus, which are the ipsissima verba of God.[48] The rabbinic description of the making of the Pentateuch as "The Holy One, blessed be He, dictates, and Moses writes"[49] is not in conflict with their account of the curses in Deuteronomy. It is true that Moses supplied his own choice of words for them when he first delivered them orally to the Jews at the time, but when it came to commit them to writing as part of the Pentateuch, he had to hear them rehearsed word for word from God, who dictated them to him, and thereby put His stamp of approval on the way in which Moses had originally delivered them.[50]

In a similar vein, but with one essential difference, must we understand the rabbinic view which we have expounded that the prophet may choose his own words. It does not mean that these words are not divine, for if such were the case, it would then be unreasonable for the rabbis to treat every word in the Bible as holy and as replete with infinite meaning.[51] But despite the fact that the prophet does not relay to his audience the ipsissima verba of God, his words are nevertheless the very words which God wants him to deliver. The prophet

---

[48]Cf. Meiri and Tosafot to BT Megillah 31b. Concerning the first four books of the Pentateuch it is said; "I shoot my words into your mouth as an arrow" Ex. R. 3:15), or "Be unto them as a vessel full of locutions" (Mekilta, amalek, 2, p. 197).

[49]BT Baba Batra 15a.

[50]See Malbim, Commentary to Deut., beg. In this way are the words of the Pentateuch different from the words of the Prophets. Cf. "Hark to the word of God [i.e. the Torah] so that you will not need to listen to the words of Jeremiah" (PSRK, p. 117b).

[51]Cf. Gen. R. 67:9.

may arrive at his words by his own efforts, but because of God's foreknowledge, it is His manifest will that the particular prophecy should be thus relayed. The difference between the nature of Deuteronomy, on the one hand, and that of the Prophets, on the other hand, apart from the general distinction between the prophecy of Moses and that of the rest of the prophets, lies in the manner of their recording. While the committing to writing of the oracles of the rpophets was by virtue of the power of recall on the part of the prophet himself or others who have heard him deliver them,[52] the writing down of Deuteronomy as well as the first four books of the Pentateuch was the result of the subsequent direct dictation on the part of God to Moses. In this way, the divinity of the wording of the Prophets derives from the general will of God that it should thus be expressed, delivered and ultimately written down, while the divinity of the wording of Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch is the direct result of its having been expressly approved by direct divine dictation.

"Thus saith the Lord." - The prophet need not receive an oracle directly from God to report it in His name. Even a message received through the intermediary of an angel may be transmitted in the name of God.[53] Moreoever, the prophet may take an ex-

---

[52]BT Baba Batra 15a.

[53]Gen. 16:9-11, 13; cf. Gen. R., ad loc., p. 457; and cf. Ex. R. 2:8; BT Sanhedrin 38b. As to who the angel of revelation may be, cf. Tan., Buber, bereshit 23, p. 17; Ex. R. 2:8; and cf. H. C. Strack and P. Billerbeck. Commentar Zum N. T. aus Talmud und Midrasch (Muenchen, 1922-28), V. I, pp. 59-60; A. I. Katsh, Judaism in Islam (New York, 1954), pp. 85-91.

isting prophecy and apply it by means of his rationative processes to a newly-created situation and report it in the name of God. This is boldly stated in the rabbinic assertion: "Since the rule of a fortiori was given for hermeneutical purposes, it is as good as if it [i.e. the derived prophecy] were given to him."[54]

The prophet may make use of this method either with reference to his own existing prophecy or to the prophecies given to other prophets, but with one telling difference. If he makes use of a prophecy of his own, he may report the derivative prophecy on his own behalf, since it is merely the unfolding and the extension of a prophecy originally given to him. But if he makes use of a prophecy given to another prophet, he cannot report the derivative prophecy in his own name. In fact, if he does report it on his own behalf, he is guilty of appropriating someone else's prophecy, making him liable to the heavenly death penalty. According to the rabbis, this was precisely the case of Hananiah Ben Azur, who died prematurely.[55]

There are actual cases on record of such derivative oracles. After the making of the golden calf, Moses declared to the Levites: "Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel, put ye

---

[54] BT Sanhedrin 89a, and Dikdukei Soferin, ad loc.; BT Shabbat 87a, and parallels; cf. BT Baba Batra 92b; BT Makkot 9b. Cf. J. Lindblom, The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah (Lund, 1951), pp. 23, 93.

[55] BT Sanhedrin 89a.

each one his sword...and slay one his kinsman" (Ex. 32:27). According to a rabbinic tradition, God had not at all issued this specific decree, but it was Moses who learned it derivatively from a previously given law (Ex. 22:19);[56] or according to a different rabbinic tradition, it was merely indicated to him in the Hebrew verb "ReD" (Ex. 32:7),which has a double meaning, as it may mean "go down," but it could also mean "chastise," which Moses applied when he ordered the death penalty for those who worshipped the golden calf.[57]

Similarly, the pronouncement after the tragic death of Nadab and Abihu, "This is it that the Lord spoke, saying: Through them that are nigh unto me I will be sanctified" (Lev. 10:3), was really the result of an inferred oracle.[58]

On the strength of such an outlook on prophecy could the rabbis have the boldness to interpret the verse, "Write for yourself these words..." (Ex. 34:27), to imply that God is granting Moses the blanket authority "to write what he wants."[59] It goes without saying that Moses was not given a carte blanche to devise his own oracles, but what the rabbis are conveying is that he was entrusted to arrive at the correct

---

[56]Mekilta, quoted by Rashi to Ex. 32:27; cf. Yalḳ. Shim., II, 43, and see Mekilta, ed. Horovitz, p. 40; Ginzei Schechter, I, p. 17; but cf. Leḳaḥ Tov to Ex. 11:4,;32:27. Cf. Philo (as quoted by H. A. Wolfson in his Philo, V. II, p.34) who cites eight instances where Moses spoke without prior express revelation.

[57]Ex. R. 42:4.

[58]BT Zebaḥim 115b; and cf. Nachmanides to Lev.10:3. Cf. ADRN, chap. 2.

[59]Ex. R. 47:end; and cf. R. David Luria and R. Zeb Wolf, ad.loc.

conclusion of what is the divine will by being able to infer and deduce from the oracles given to him any needed application to new situations.

We have also on record cases of a prophet who interprets a prophecy previously delivered by another prophet and gives this derivative prophecy the full force of an express divine locution. The rabbis interpret the verse: "Josiah refused to turn away his face from him, but presumed to wage war with him, and would not listen to the words of Nekho from the mouth of God" (2 Chron. 35:22) to refer to "Jeremiah who said to Josiah: I have thus received from my master Isaiah 'and I will spur on Egypt against Egypt' (Isa. 19:2)." For not obeying this applicationof the words of Isaiah on the part of Jeremiah, Josiah suffered death in battle, and in his last moments of his life, Jeremiah heard him mutter: "God is right, for I have rebelled against His word" (Lam. 1:18), that is, "against His word and the words of His agent [i.e. Jeremiah]."[60]

Another instructive example is the case of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah who came to the prophet Ezekiel to seek an oracle from him as to whether they should bow to the idol or not, to which Ezekiel responds with an application of a verse in Isaiah (26:20) to the effect that they should.[61]

This power of the prophets is not necessarily limited

---

[60]Lam. R., ad loc.; cf. Tosef., Ta'anit 2:10, and see S. Lieberman, Tosefta ki-Fshuta, p. 1095, for parallels.

[61]Cant. R. 7:13.

to derivations obtained from a specific verse, but the prophets may analyze the entire content of prophecy and come to a conclusion, as in the case of the verse, "And God spoke not to blot out the name of Israel" (2 Kings 14:27) which, according to the rabbis, was the result of the prophets' inspection of all prophecies regarding this question.[62]

It all goes to demonstrate that the prophet is not limited exclusively to what he is given by express divine revelation, but that he is the master of prophecy to the extent that he is able to expand existing prophecies and extract from them ever fresh implications and report them in the name of God.[63] In many instances, the prophet himself will make this fact known to his listeners by means of the oft-used phrase "For the mouth of the Lord has spoken" which, according to the rabbis, makes reference to an old prophecy whence the new oracle issues.[64]

---

[62] Ex. R. 44:end, and parallels.

[63] Regardless of how wide a latitude the rabbis would grant to the prophet in this area, the prophet's terms of reference will always remain fixed and limited to the actual implications contained in the explicitly given prophecy. The rabbis would have shuddered at the irreverent suggestion offered by W. F. Lofthouse [in AJSL, XL (1923-1924), p. 24] that the prophet uses the term "Thus had God spoken" when he is really uttering his deepest conviction...he felt a statement to be absolutely certain, he was convinced that it came from God." Cf. the view of J. Skinner in his Prophecy and Religion, pp. 220-221.

[64] Mekilta, pisḥa 12, p. 40; cf. A. Kaminka, Meḥkarim V. I, pp. 159ff.

The potency of the prophetic word. - It has been a trend among modern writers on this subject to consider the prophetic pronouncement as being charged with a vital force all its own. Once the prophet utters his message it turns into an independent reality which will inexorably work for its self-fulfilment. This concept has been variously expressed. Here follow several such formulations. "The prophetic word is not a mere prediction that something will come to pass, it brings to pass what it fore~~tells~~s.... The word is a concrete reality, a veritable force."[65] "The prophet's function consists in the liberation of the word of God.... Once spoken and current, his word is...depersonalized, and enters upon its own independent history.... The word of the prophet is, in fact, like its frequent 'symbolic act,' something done and not merely said."[66] "When it left the lips of the prophet it was but launched on its career of activity, beyond the control of the prophet."[67]

The rabbis on their part do not appear to be so dogmatic. They draw a difference between the decree of the Urim and Tumim, which is irrevocable, and the decree of the prophet which may be recalled.[68] In fact, all prophecies of woe are in

---

[65] G. F. Moore, Judaism, V. I, p. 414; cf. A. R. Johnson, The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God (Cardiff, 1942), p. 6; cf. J. Z. Lauterbach, "The Belief in the Power of the Word," HUCA, XIV (1939), pp. 287-302; H. Ringgren, Israelitische Religion, p. 231.

[66] H.W.Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the O.T. (Oxford, 1946), pp. 170-71.

[67] H.H.Rowley, The Servant of the Lord, p.119; cf. his Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel, pp.13, 15.

[68] BT Yoma 63b.

a sense conditional, and their ultimate fulfilment is contingent upon the continuance of the state of affairs in which they were originally issued. The moment the people repent and a change for the better occurs, the prophecies become inoperative.[69] The fact that prophecies of weal are unconditional is not because of the particular efficacy of the prophetic word, but is owed it to the nature of the divine goodness. It forms part of the "thirteen attributes of mercy," one of which is "truth," which stands for adhering to a promise regardless of what may subsequently take place.[70] Thus, prophecies of woe are in the nature of threats while prophecies of weal are in the nature of promises, and because of God's mercifulness the former are conditional, while the latter are absolute because of God's goodness.

That the rabbis have not considered the prophetic word as being inherently charged with a self propelling power irrevocably seeking its goal is clearly expressed in the rabbinic

---

[69] PT Sanhedrin 11:7, p. 30b; cf. PT Ta'anit 2:1, p. 65b, and parallels; Gen. R. 53:14, p.558; Mid. Ps. 13:1; Tan., mas'ei, 7. This idea is the burden of the assertion: "When God issues good or bad decrees concerning Israel, if they be beneficial, it is reported back to Him; but if they be bad, it is not reported back to Him." (Mekilta, pisha 1, p.5). There is a rabbinic tradition which draws an additional difference between decrees of woe which "are not issued from the mouth of God, but are indicated by a "heavenly voice," but when "He wills to decree good...it issues from the mouth of His Holiness" (Targ. to Lam. 3:38). This is, however, not part of the main currents of rabbinic thinking as can be seen from all the above references and many others. Cf. Yalk. Shim., II, 62.

[70] Cf. BT Shabbat 55a; Gen. R. 53:5; cf. Mid. Ps. 117, end; Mekilta, Amalek, 2, p. 198; cf. Ibn Ezra to Ex. 34:6; cf. Rashi and Radak to 1Sam. 15:29.

statement: "Anyone who trusts in what the prophets tell him is as if he would take a sword and stick it into his insides."[71] Such a person is guilty of equating prophecy with witchcraft. Even such an apparently clear cut case as the efficacy of a curse is sometimes understood by the rabbis to be devoid of any intrinsic potency, but to be in the nature of an imprecatory prayer. When the boys mocked Elisha by calling out to him, "Go away, baldhead," Elisha turned around and "cursed them in the name of God. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood and tore forty-two boys of them" (2 Kings 2:23,24). According to the rabbis, "Elisha accomplished it by prayer."[72]

The fact that a prophecy may have a built-in double meaning, the true meaning of which will become apparent in the future as a result of a forthcoming act or lack of it, makes it rather difficult to consider the prophetic word to be intrinsically charged. Such was the disposition of Jonah's prophecy, "In forty days Nineveh shall be overturned" (Jonah 3:4). According to the rabbis, it could have meant that Nineveh would be destroyed, as Jonah was led to think, but it could also have meant that the populace of Nineveh would have a complete turn of heart and repent, as God has in the end revealed to Jonah.[73] This is perhaps what the rabbis are pro-

---

[71] Deut. R., Lieberman, p. 45; cf. PT Ḥagigah 2:1, p. 77a.

[72] BT Megillah 27a. Cf. I. Arama, Akedat Yitzḥak, part 13.

[73] BT Sanhedrin 89b. A similar rationalization is offered by the rabbis to explain "the binding of Isaac," wherein the critical phrase, "and bring him up for a wholeburnt offering"

prounding in their assertion that in the Prophets "there are words which are explicit and there are words which are unclear."[74] The reason for the Prophets' containing unclear words can be traced to this very fact of the equivocal character of many a prophecy.

It is true that the rabbis in dealing with the revocation of a prophecy distinguish between a prophecy given in privacy and one which was made public, but this distinction is of an entirely different order. This distinction is made in connection with the prophecy which Isaiah delivered to Hezekiah, "Set thy house in order for thou shalt die" (Is. 38:1), which, as a result of Hezekiah's prayer, Isaiah was ordered to retract (Ibid. v. 5). According to the rabbis, Isaiah was puzzled and inquired, "Sovereign of the world, at first you told me that and now you are telling me this: How can I tell him this? Said He, he [i.e. Hezekiah] is humble and he will accept it from you. Furthermore, the prophecy was not as yet published."[75] We must not infer from the last remark that an unpublished prophecy is of lesser inherent potency. It is rather to be understood as a placation of Isaiah's fears of having to face the difficulty of appearing in the embarrassing position of self contradiction were his first prophecy known

---

(Ge. 22:2), was first understood by Abraham in its usual sense of sacrificing, but it was subsequently explained to him that it was meant literally, to bring him up and merely put him on the altar in the manner of a wholeburnt offering, but not to slaughter him. (Gen. R. 56:8, p. 604, and parallels).

[74] BT Megillah 3a.

[75] Kohel. R. 5:4; PT Sanhedrin 10:2, p. 28c; Batei Midrashot, Wertheimer, V. II, p. 301.

to the populace since not too many people understand the profound difference between prophecy and divination. Hence he had to be assured that his first prophecy had not as yet reached the ears of the people at large.

A final instructive illustration, which shows that in the rabbinic view the prophetic word does not constitute an absolute detached force inexorably driving towards its goal, is contained in a Halakhic ruling. Before the Temple was destroyed, one took a vow of Nezirut. After the Temple was destroyed, not being able to bring the necessary sacrifices required for the completion of the Nezirut, he wanted to be released from his vow on the strength of the law that any vow can be absolved if there is a factor of which he was unaware at the time the vow was made. In this case the Nazir was not thinking of the impending destruction of the Temple, which would make it impossible for him to bring the prescribed sacrifices. However, this loophole is not accepted by the rabbis because a loophole to be valid must have existed at the time the vow was made, otherwise it is termed "Nolad," something subsequently born, and it can have no retroactive effect on the vow made before it came into being.[76] This

---

[76] BT Nazir 32b; PT Nazir 5:5, p. 54a,b. The rabbis subsequently raise the question as to why the possible lack of awareness on the part of the Nazir of the existence of the prophecies forecasting the destruction of the Temple should not constitute an invalidating loophole. This argument does not refute our position since this loophole does not treat of the destruction of the Temple as such, but rather considers the lack of awareness of the already existing prophecies concerning its destruction. This can not be termed "Nolad," for the prophetic predictions existed as an independent fact at the time when he became a Nazir, even if their effect was non-existent as yet.

stands despite the fact that long before the vow was taken, the prophets had already foretold the destruction of the Temple. Nonetheless, the rabbis treat the impending destruction of the Temple as something unreal and non-existent, evidently because a prophecy for the future, before it materializes, does not cause any real change in the present reality of the person or object concerned.

However, it would be incorrect to conclude that the rabbis consider the prophetic prediction as being purely informative, an instrument of disclosing something which will take place. There is no denying that the declared word of a divine revelation is possessed of a certain amount of force which it carries with it until it is realized. But this force is not self contained, blindly propelling itself towards its target and striking it down, such as is the case with certain types of curses. The prophetic prediction, being devoid of any volitional elements, contains no indwelling force. What it does is to launch the divine plan which will now go into operation. From now on God will be setting up the necessary sequence of events which will lead to the realization of the prophetic prediction. Before a prophecy is promulgated it is in a state of inactivity, being merely part of the divine knowledge of what will happen. Once it is promulgated, it is transformed and set in motion by the preparations and the gradual creation of all prerequisites needed for its ultimate fulfilment. Even this complex of events triggered into being by the proclamation of the oracle will not bring on the fulfilment of this oracle, for it always remains under the constant

control and guidance of God, who can redirect it to other goals. This is poignantly brought out in the rabbinic passage which follows:

> When the arrow leaves the hand of a fighter in the land, he is no more able to bring it back to him. But the Holy One, blessed be He, is different. When the Jews do not do His will, as it were, a decree is issued from before Him.... They repent, He immediately recalls it, as it says: 'And my hand holds the judgment' (Deut. 32:41). May I therefore understand that He recalls it emptily... He turns it upon the idol worshippers. 77

Thus, the divine decree sets a process in motion, generating a destructive force which will not be undone but, being under complete divine control at all times, can be employed for other purposes and rerouted to other targets.

In this way need we understand the rabbinic observation: "Of all the prophets who prophesied about [the destruction of] Jerusalem, their prophecy was not made definite until Jeremiah arose."[78] Thus, only in Jeremiah's time when the actual destruction took place have all previous prophecies concerning the destruction finally assumed definite form. Previously, they were in an undetermined state.

The source of prophecy. - The rabbis conceive revelation as a unique historical occurrence which took place at Mt. Sinai.

---

[77]Mekilta, shirah, 4, p. 130; cf. Lekah Tov to Ex. 15:3; cf. Gen. R. 35;end, p. 333.

[78]PSRK, 13, p. 115b, ed. Mandelbaum p. 237; Yalk. Shim., II, 258.

All subsequent prophecies derive their power from the divine revelation which was manifested to all present at Mt. Sinai as well as to all the souls yet unborn. There they obtained their respective share of the revelation which will be made known to the prophets of each generation as they become ready for it, and as the situation ripens for the need of their prophecy.[79] In the words of the rabbis:

> The prophets received from Sinai the messages they were to prophesy to subsequent generations; for Moses told Israel; 'But with him that standeth here with us this day...and also with him that is not here with us this day...' (Deut. 29:14)...Although they did not yet exist, still each one received his share of the revelation... So Isaiah said: 'From the time that it was, there am I' (48:16). Isaiah said: I was present at the Revelation on Sinai whence I received this prophecy, only, 'And now the Lord God hath sent me, and His spirit' (Ibid.); for hitherto no permission was given to him to prophesy. [80]

---

[79] Cf. Kohel. R. 1:29, commenting on the verse: "There is a thing of which it is said, lo, this is new!, but it was already in existence in the ages which were before us" (Kohel. 1:10); cf. Lev. R. 15:2, p. 321.

[80] Ex. R. 28:4; Tan., yitro, 11; cf. Kohel. R. 1:26; BT Berakhot 5a; BT Megillah 19b. This assumption does not deny in the least the existence of pre-Sinaitic prophets, a fact which the rabbis acknowledge without reservation. See Seder Olam R., chap. 21; BT Megillah 14a. It merely denies the possibility of future prophecy without the benefit of the Sinaitic revelation. What it really aims to accomplish is to minimize the dichotomy between the Law and the Prophets which, according to a rabbinic report, was the contention of a heretical sect which claimed that "the Prophets and Hagiographa are not part of the Torah, and therefore we do not believe in them" (Tan., re'eh, 1; ed. Buber, p. 19; cf. Mid. Ps. 78:1).

Following this doctrine to its logical conclusion we come to the point that all prophecies to come are in actuality contained in the hidden recesses of the Pentateuch which embodies the sole and original revelation, as the rabbis boldly phrased it: "Moses said all the words of the prophets and his own, and whosoever prophesied was from the source of Moses."[81] On this basis were the rabbis able to asseverate: "Is there anything written in the Scriptures that is not adumbrated in the Pentateuch?"[82] This also accounts for the rabbinic tenet that no new law can be derived from the Prophets,[83] for there is no new revelation save the one contained explicitly or by inference in the Pentateuch.

This view will help in removing a baffling difficulty in the rabbinic habit of using Biblical verses anachronously. The rabbis oftentimes place verses found in later books in the mouths of individuals having lived at an earlier date e.g. Joab reciting verses from Jeremiah,[84] Solomon making use of Isaiah,[85] Phineas quoting Proverbs,[86] and many more of such similar instances.[87] However, once we realize that in the rabbinic view all of the prophecies originated on Mt. Sinai,

---

[81] Ex. R. 42:8.

[82] BT Ta'anit 9a; Num. R. 10:18; cf. Shir ha-Shirim Zuṭa 1:1. This was the feat of Ben Azai who "tied the words of the Torah to the Prophets and the words of the Prophets to the Hagiographa, and the words of the Torah were as delightful as on the day they were given at Sinai "(Lev.R.16:4,p.354).

[83] See infra,p.189. [84] BT Baba Batra 21b.

[85] BT Baba Batra 10b. [86] BT Sanhedrin 82a.

[87] BT Sanhedrin 89b; BT Horayot 12a; BT Menahot 53b; Kohel. R. 12:9; cf. especially Ruth R. 8:3, where David makes a distinct reference to the Scroll of Lamentation. Cf. I. Heinemann, Darkei ha-Aggadah, pp. 39-43.

with each one to be made public in its due time, it should not be at all surprising to find a verse recorded in a later book placed by the rabbis in the mouth of an individual who lived much earlier. What the rabbis have in mind is that the thought and idea contained in a particular verse was known earlier, and the reason that it was not recorded at that earlier time is that no permission to do so was given until later.

Fallibility. - Commenting on the case of the prophet who preached the worship of idols, concerning whom it is written, "And that prophet or that dreamer shall be put to death" (Deut. 13:6), the rabbis add, "But not if he was under duress or in error."[88] There is a similar comment on the verse dealing with the false prophet which reads, "Wilfully has the prophet spoken it" (Deut. 18:22), from which the rabbis infer, "For wilfulness is he liable, but he is not liable for unwittingness."[89]

These comments show conclusively that the rabbis admit the possibility of a person's being judiciously misled or unintentionally deluded into believing that he is in receipt of a prophetic oracle. Not only is such an error possible in the case of a non-prophet who may think himself to have received a revelation,[90] but it also applies to a true prophet who may

---

[88]Sifre, ad loc., p. 150. [89]Sifre, ad loc., p. 222.

[90]By the same token, the opposite is also possible, in which case a person receiving a revelation was not certain that it was an authentic revelation. This is what happened to Samuel when he first received a prophecy (BT Shabbat 113b). Cf. marginal gloss to Tan. as recorded by S. Buber in introduction to his edition of Tan., p. 125, bottom.

be under the false impression of having received an oracle when such is not the case. For the first citation treats, according to R. Akiba,[91] of a true prophet who has turned away from God, and yet is exculpated if he has acted under duress or in error. The only way we are sure that he is a false prophet is by the content of his oracle. If the prophet orders the worshipping of idols, even temporarily, or preaches the permanent abrogation of a Biblical commandment, he is ipso facto branded false.[92]

Furthermore, even in those cases where God may deliberately set out to confound an individual by leading him to believe himself an inspired prophet,[93] there is room for him to test the veracity of his oracle. Such was the case of Zedekiah b. Kenana and his fellow false prophets who prophesied to Ahab: "Go up to Ramot Gilead and succeed, for God will deliver it into the hands of the king" (1 Kings 22:12). According to the true prophet Micaiah b. Imlah, Zedekiah b. Kenana and his fellows were in reality misled by a false spirit at God's behest: "The Lord said: who will deceive Ahab so that he may go up and fall at Ramot Gilead...A spirit came and said: ...I will go forth and become a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets" (1 Kings 22:19-22). The rabbis were quick to

---

[91]Sifre, ad loc., p. 149; BT Sanhedrin 90a.

[92]Deut. 13:6;18:20, and cf. Sifre, ad loc.; BT Sanhedrin 90a; BT Yebamot 90b. Cf. S. Mowinckel, quoted by H. H. Rowley, The Servant of the Lord, p. 126.

[93]Cf. Ezek. 14:9.

question: What should Zedekiah b. Kenana have done since he was misled? To which they reply: "He should have checked by the rule of R. Yitzhak who said: 'No two prophets prophesy in the selfsame style!!"[94] Since they all received their prophecy in identical language, he should have realized that it was a false oracle. Thus, a false prophecy carries with it the telltale signs pointing to its falsity.[95] Some of these signs are so self-evident that the bearer of such a prophecy is subject to punishment for the sin of being a false prophet, while other signs may not be too obvious, in which case the bearer of the false prophecy is acquitted.

What is of much greater significance is the fact that even the true prophet bringing a true prophecy may be subject to error in his interpretation of his message. Nathan misconstrued the prophecy concerning David: "God has sought a man after his own heart" (1 Sam 13:14), to imply that God agreed with David's intent to build the Temple. Because of this misinterpretation, the rabbis declare, Nathan was prompted to inform David: "Go on, do whatever is in your heart, for God is with you" (2 Sam. 7:3).[96] This he had to rescind in favor of a prophecy which he received during the night following

---

[94] BT Sanhedrin 90a, and see Dikdukei Soferim, ad loc.

[95] Cf. the instance recounted in 1 Kings 13:18-24 about the false prophecy given by the false prophet from Bethel to the prophet who came from Judah. There, too, the prophet from Judah could have known that it was false since he was not informed that his original prophecy was being withdrawn, and he therefore deserved the penalty he received in the end. Cf. BT Sanhedrin 89b.

[96] Mid. Ps. 62:4.

enjoining David from carrying out his desire.

At times the prophet may fail to obtain the full import of his message. This is what happened with Jonah's prophecy: "Forty days more, and Nineveh will be overturned" (Jonah 3:4). According to the rabbis, Jonah thought that it had but one meaning: Nineveh will be destroyed, whereas in reality it also had an alternative meaning: Nineveh will have a turn of heart and repent, which will save it from destruction. This last interpretation eluded Jonah's searching mind.[97]

A similar incident occurred with regard to Abraham. When he received the commandment to take his son Isaac and to "bring him up there as a burnt-offering" (Gen. 22:2), Abraham could think only of its commonly accepted meaning, to sacrifice his son. However, according to the rabbis, it also had a literal meaning which merely called for the placing of Isaac on the altar in the manner of a burnt-offering, which in the end God revealed to Abraham as being his intent.[98] It should be added, however, that it was God's aim to mislead Abraham into thinking that he was asked to sacrifice his son so that his faith would be tested thereby, and the misunderstanding was not at all due to Abraham's prophetic faculties going awry. In any case, regardless of the reason which may be offered to explain Abraham's unawareness of the full meaning of the oracle

---

[97] BT Sanhedrin 89b.

[98] Gen. R. 56:8, p. 604; cf. Bt Ta'anit 4a.

which he received, the net result still proves that there are instances where a prophet may fail to grasp certain aspects of his message.

This does not mean that every prophecy abounds in hidden meanings of which the prophet is unaware. If such were the case, prophetism would become meaningless, and would be reduced to the mumbo jumbo of the magician or, at best, to the weasel words of the Delphic oracle, which the rabbis deprecate. Commenting on the verse, "...that they should be ready for that day" (Est. 3:14), the rabbis state: "The prophecies of the other nations are ambiguous, and they do not declare whether they are to slay or be slain... But the prophecy of the Jews is clear: 'That the Jews should be ready for that day to avenge themselves on their enemies' (Est. 8:13)."[99]

We must thus conclude that whatever ambiguity a prophecy may contain is the making of the Divine for an immediate purpose, but He will not permit the true prophet to go on erring for any length of time without making it clear to him in the end.[100] However, even such instances are in the minority. For the preponderant part, the prophet is endowed with the necessary divine aid correctly to interpret the prophetic message which he bears.

---

[99]Esther R. 7:24; cf. BT Sota 12b. Cf. S. Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York, 1950), pp. 198-99.

[100]Cf. BT Hullin 5b, and parallels. Cf. Rashi to Jer. 23:36 who says that only the true prophet is capable of grasping the true meaning of a revelation.

Delivery. - The delivery of a prophecy is not to be treated as being solely of a communicative nature merely to give currency to the oracle. In addition to its informative character, it had to be effective so as to provoke the listener and evoke a positive response from him.[101] It is small wonder that "every word the prophets spoke to Israel would not be spoken before they had rehearsed it four times privately with themselves,"[102] to make sure that their words would carry the desired effect.

Effect, however, was not the overriding objective; the oracle had to reflect as accurately as possible that character of the revelation as it was given to the prophet. Hence, it was only the prophet himself who was authorized to deliver the message, and he was not permitted to make use of a messenger to do so on his behalf, as only the very prophet who received the message could convey the exact undertones and connotations which the oracle contained. Moses is described by the rabbis as having been eminently successful in this task: "With the same sound, force, intonation that Moses heard [the Locution], he proclaimed it to Israel".[103]

That the prophet is required to deliver his message in person and cannot even make use of a meturgeman

---

[101] Cf. reaction of people to Amos, according to the rabbis (Lev. R. 10:2, p. 197).

[102] Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 249; cf. Tan., Buber, va-yakhel, 5, p. 122, and parallels.

[103] Cf. Mekilta de RSBY to Ex. 19:19, p. 144.

(an interpreter who would repeat aloud to the audience what the speaker would whisper to him), is derived by the rabbis from the verse, "And he [i.e. the prophet] shall speak unto them" (Deut. 18:18), with the implication of the word "he" being, the prophet alone and no one else.[104] Only in an emergency is an exception to be made and at that only with the proviso that the prophet record his message in writing, from which his appointed messenger may read to the people concerned at the appropriate time. This is exactly what took place when Jeremiah was imprisoned. He first dictated his prophecy to Baruch b. Neriah who transcribed it on a scroll from which he subsequently recited it (Jer. 36:4-6). The rabbis view this as a special concession because of the circumstances: "Not that Baruch was wont to speak in the presence of [i.e. for] Jeremiah, but it was because of the need of the hour."[105]

Another exception yet to be made is where it concerns the performance of a prophetic act with which the prophet was charged by God. In such a case it seems that it was permissible for the prophet to entrust its execution to his proxy. This is demonstrated in the following passage: "The

---

[104] Sifre, ad loc., p. 221; cf. Mekilta, shabta, 1, p. 340; BT Erubin 54b. What happened to Aaron, who was announcing to Pharaoh the words given to him by Moses (Mekilta de-RSBY, p. 6; Tan., va-era, 10) is not to be applied universally. It was an express concession by God in deference to Moses' plea that he was incapable of addressing Pharaoh because of his speech handicap (Ex. 6:29,30;7:1,2).

[105] Sifre, Num., 99, p. 98; cf. case of Elijah who conveyed a prophecy of his by way of a written letter (2 Chron. 21:12; cf. Seder Olam R., chap. 17). Cf. M. Friedmann's introduction to Seder Elijah R., p. 18; but cf. Y. Kaufman, op. cit., V. III, pp. 53-54, who considers prophesying by means of the written word as normal.

Holy One, blessed be He, ordered Elijah to anoint Yehu b. Nimshi, but Elijah ordered Elisha, and Elisha ordered Jonah who anointed him.... From here we learn that the messenger of a man is as the man himself."[106]

If an explanation is called for to account for the difference between a message of words which the prophet must deliver in person and a prophecy of action which the prophet may have it performed by his proxy, there is a Halakhic principle which would fully explain this difference. There is a standing rule: "Words [given to a messenger] cannot be given over to [another] messenger."[107] Hence, the prophet himself being a mere messenger of God is legally powerless to transmit his verbal message through the agency of another person. Ideas and words are intangible and cannot be conveyed through successive messengers as a good deal will be lost or, for that matter, may be augmented in the course of such a transmission. Only tangible objects or the performance of concrete deeds are transmissible by means of successive agents, in the view of the Halakha. Thus, when a prophet is charged with the performance of a definite task, such as the anointment or appointment of a new king, he may assign its execution to a proxy.[108]

---

[106] Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 153; Sifre Zuṭa, p. 278.

[107] BT Giṭṭin 29a, and parallels.

[108] Perhaps this is the reason why Elisha handed his staff to Geḥazi when he sent him to revive the dead child (2 Kings 4:29), since words alone are not transferable.

All that has been said thus far applies only to prophecy *per se*, but not to the Hagiographic materials, even though they may be saturated with prophetic import. With regard to the Hagiographa it is indicated in a rabbinic tradition that they may be made public by means of an announcer. According to this tradition, whenever the term "A maskil unto David" appears, it signifies that David proclaimed it through an announcer.[109]

The manner of proclaiming the Hagiographa is not an essential part of their nature as their task is to teach and to edify, and this can be effectively accomplished by conveying their ideas and teachings through an announcer.[110] But prophecy is of an entirely different order, as one of the fundamental properties and tasks of prophetism is the very proclamation of the divine message. The message must be given currency precisely as it issued from God, which could be done only by the prophet himself who experienced it. The divine message must move the audience for whom it was intended in a degree similar to the way in which it moved the prophet who received it.

---

[109] BT Pesaḥim 117a; Mid. Ps. 24:3; cf. Rashi to Ps. 32:1;88:1. In Yalḳ. Shim. to Ps. 24 a distinction is made between "a maskil unto David," which signifies that David himself made it public, and "unto David a maskil," which signifies that David made it public through an announcer.

[110] Cf. N.Z.Y. Berlin in his commentary to the *She'eltot* 8:10 and 89:2, where he shows from the Talmud that the rabbis consider the Hagiographa to have been written in the language of common speech in contradistinction to the Prophets which was composed in prophetically divine language.

When the prophet proclaims his message he relives his original experience, and in a way, his act of proclamation constitutes an act of prophesying. Thus, the prophet is not relaying a message to his audience, but is re-enacting the message as it was given to him. In doing so he acts qua prophet while delivering his prophecy. The message is inseparable from the prophet, and it cannot be conveyed by anyone save the prophet himself.

For this reason, perhaps, have the rabbis considered the sanctity of the Prophets to be superior to that of the Hagiographa[111] since the delivery of the former bears the imprint of the original prophetic experience while the latter merely constitutes the report and record of the divine revelation. This may also account for the difference in name, the Prophets being termed "nevi'im" while the Hagiographa are called "Ketuvim" (Writings), for in the case of the former the delivery was an integral part of the message, but in the case of the latter, it was the content of the message which mattered and not the manner of its delivery.

The nature of the prophetic spirit. - It has long been observed that in the rabbinic literature there are to be found numerous instances wherein the terms Shekhinah or Ruah ha-Kodesh appear and act as quasi-independent entities to the extent that they may even enter into dialogues with God Himself as their inter-

---

[111] Cf. BT Baba Batra 13b; cf. Tosafot to BT Rosh ha-Shanah 32a; R. Nissim Gerondi, ad loc.; Meiri, Kiryat Sefer, ed. Hershler p. 74; S. Lieberman Tosefta Ki-fshuta, order Mo'ed, p. 1054.

locutor.[112] This seems to be alluded to in such phrases as "The Shekhinah stood up before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said to Him...";[113] or, "The Holy Spirit says to the Holy One, blessed be He,...";[114] or, "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the Holy Spirit...";[115] or, "The Locution returned to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said before Him ..."[116] Attempts have been made to compare the position of these terms to the position of the Logos in Philo and in Christian theology.[117] However, the usage of this term in the above-mentioned citations does not in itself warrant the sweeping conclusion that the Shekhinah and Ruah ha-Kodesh have independent ontological existence.[118] What is betrayed by

---

[112] L. Gruenhut in his introduction to Yalḳut Makiri on Proverbs; A.S.Horodetzki, Ha-Mistorin be-yisrael (2d ed.; Tel-Aviv, 1952), V. I, pp. 139,149. H.A.Wolfson shares this view, but with the modification that these were not permanent entities. To quote: "In the vague utterances about the 'Holy Spirit' and the 'Shekinah' in talmudic literature, there is indeed sometimes the undoubted implication that they are real beings created by God. But there is never any definite statement that they are permanent beings, after the manner of the Logos..." (in JQR, XXXIII, 57). Cf. idem, Philo, V. I, p. 287. Cf. I. Efros, Ha-Philosophia ha-Yehudit ha-Atika (Jerusalem, 1959), pp.93,97.

[113] Mid. Prov., chapt. 22.

[114] Lev. R. 6:1, p. 127; Mid. Ps. 31:3; Tan., Buber, Noah 3, p. 30.

[115] Gen. R. 97, p.1244; Pesiḳta R., 3, p. 12a.

[116] Num. R. 10:3, and parallels.

[117] Cf. G. F. Moore, "Judaism", V. I. pp.417,437,438; Idem, "Intermediaries in Jewish Theology," HTR, XV (1922), pp.146-173. I. Abrahams, "Egyptian Fragments of Passover Haggadah," JQR, o.s., X(1897-98), p.51, note 1. J.Abelson, op. cit., pp. 146-173. A Marmorstein, The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God, pp.99ff.

[118] Cf. J.Z.Lauterbach, Rabbinic Essays, p.138; Y. Kaufman, op. cit., V. I, pp. 517, 518; cf. H. Parzen "The Ruaḥ Ha-Ḳodesh in Tannaitic Literature," JQR, XX, 57.

these citations is that they are Divine qualities, and even though they form part of God's essence, they may at times find separate expression and enter, as it were, into debate with the rest of the qualities of the godhead. For God may act or express Himself either through one of His qualities or through the totality of their combined and unified effect.

Such a view suggests itself from the rabbinic treatment of the qualities of Justice and Mercy, wherein the quality of Justice may argue with God, and at times even win the argument,[119] or where at times, God must hide His decision from the quality of Justice.[120] Now, the very fact that they are always qualified by the appelation of "quality" is palpable evidence that they are to be considered as part of the divine attributes, and yet they are still treated as fully capable of acting, as it were, apart from God. Hence, we may safely conclude that the Shekhina and Ruah ha-Kodesh, even when they appear as interlocutors of God, are nothing but a kind of divine quality seeking to gain supremacy over the other divine qualities of God. In sum, they are not to be taken as hypostatized entities, but rather as additional qualities of God which, at one time or another, may be wrestling with the other qualities within Himself for ascendancy.[121]

---

[119]BT Shabbat 55a; BT Megillah 15b; BT Sanhedrin 94a, 97b.

[120]BT Sanhedrin 103a; cf. BT Sukkah 14a; PT Ta'anit 3:6, p. 66d.

[121]This does not materially affect the nature of the unity of God, a problem so crucial to the sophisticated thinking of medieval Jewish philosophy to whom unity meant non-compositeness (See I. Husik, A History of Jewish Philosophy

In this connection it is worth noting that by giving the construct form of the Hebrew term, "Ruaḥ ha-Ḳodesh," adjectival force, it has been erroneously rendered in English as the Holy Spirit. Instead, it should be given genitival, that is, possessive meaning, and should thus be rendered as the Spirit of the Holiness, with "the Holiness" being a metonym for God, as is common in the rabbinic texts.[122] Hence, the rabbinic term "Ruaḥ ha-Ḳodesh" is now the true equivalent of the Scriptural "Ruaḥ Elohim" of which it is undoubtedly a counterpart. Such a meaning of "Ruaḥ ha-Ḳodesh" militates even more strongly against treating it as a quasi-independent entity.

Judged from this perspective, prophetism which is the objectified reality of the Holy Spirit may at times not be representative of the unified totality of God since the Holy Spirit is but one of the divine qualities. This will illuminate a widely-quoted, but often misunderstood rabbinic passage.

> Wisdom was asked: what shall be the penalty of the sinner? It replied to them: 'Ill fortune will pursue the sinner' (Prov. 13:21). Prophecy was asked what is the penalty of the sinner? It answered them: 'He who sins shall die' (Ezek. 18:20). The Torah was asked: what is the penalty of the sinner?

(Philadelphia, 1916), passim; J. L. Blau, The Story of Jewish Philosophy (New York, 1962), passim. In the rabbinic view, however, the concept of God's unity simply asserts that there is no rival or associated power besides God; it stands for His oneness, and has nothing to do with His essence being composed or non-composed. See J.L.Blau, ibid., p. 71.

[122] Cf. S. Lieberman, Tosefta Ki-fshuta, order Mo'ed, p. 1094. For the sake of convenience, however, we will continue to make use of the familiar rendering, the Holy Spirit.

> It answered them: Let him bring a guilt-offering and he will be forgiven. The Holy One, blessed be He, was asked what is the penalty of the sinner? He answered: Let him repent and he will be forgiven! This is what is written, 'Good and righteous is the Lord, therefore He instructs sinners in the way' (Ps. 25:8). 123

The rabbis in this passage do not at all affirm that there is a contradiction in the three divisions of the Bible, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, as to the disposition of the sinner, so that in the end God had to intervene and resolve this problem. For in actuality we know that each view expressed is a valid one, having application to a particular set of instances, and there is thus no contradiction between these various views. What the rabbis meant is that each of the three divisions of the Bible constitutes and represents a distinct quality of the godhead, and as such each one demands a different treatment of the sinner. The quality of Torah as cult and ritual calls for a suitable sacrifice to atone for sins. The quality of Prophetism, with its strict providential outlook on life, considers sin as an act of rebellion and it thus demands the ultimate penalty of death as becomes an act of treason. The quality of Wisdom, with its rational anturalistic view of life, considers penalty to be a natural consequence of crime, in the manner of Karma. It therefore asserts that one or another kind of trouble must inescapably follow in the wake of sin. Only God in His inscrutable totality could formulate the concept of repentance and proclaim it as the panacea for all transgressions.

---

[123] PT Makkot 2:6, p. 31d; Yalḳ. Shim., II, 358, 702; PSRK, 25, p. 158b. ed. Mandelbaum p. 355; cf. A Heschel's

It needs to be noted, however, that it would be erroneous to conclude on the basis of what has been said thus far that prophetism represents at all times solely one quality of God. Prophetism also reveals to us the totality of the divine will as such. This is poignantly evidenced by the fact that the concept of the all-sufficiency of repentance as a divine gift is revealed to us only by a prophetic verse, and the preaching of the efficacy of repentance pervades every prophetic theme. What the rabbis had in mind was that prophetism, besides revealing to us the ultimate unified will of God, many a time also represents merely a particular divine quality, in which case prophetism constitutes merely one divine category.

This may be the reason why at times the prophet, in his dialogue with God, may venture to take God to task and, with apparent impunity, criticize His decision.[124] It is not to be construed as a sort of parliamentary immunity or as acting in the manner of "his majesty's opposition." It is more than that. In such instances, the prophet gives expression to certain feelings neither as an individual nor as the representative of the people, but instead acts as the mouthpiece of the divine quality of the Holy Spirit which is seeking an audition and is striving for application. It is

---

understanding of this passage, in his God in Search of Man, p. 261; cf. Deut. R., Lieberman, p. 58. We find the rabbis treating these three elements as separate kinds of revelations also in another instance (BT Nedarim 81a; BT Baba Metzia 85b). The Torah is often treated as an objectified reality in many a rabbinic passage, e.g. BT Sanhedrin 101a; Cant. R. 5:8; Yalk. Shim., II, 597, 934; PRE, chap. 11, and cf. ibid., chap. 3.

[124] E. g. Ex. R. 43:1; BT Yoma 69b.

no wonder, therefore, that the rabbis exhibit no qualms in treating the prophet's own words in his dialogue with God as holy and virtually on a par with the divine locution itself.[125]

In sum, the Holy Spirit in its externalized form which is prophetism represents a specific quality in the make-up of the Divine Essence, even though it acts very often as a channel for the revelation of the total divine will!

The prophets as preachers. - That the task of preaching and exhortation, to be the religious, moral and ethical conscience of the people, is a primary preoccupation of prophetism cannot be gainsaid. The verse, "I am sending an angel before thee, to guard thee on the way" (Ex. 23:20), is construed by the rabbis to refer to the institution of prophecy and its task, the "angel" being the prophet, and "to guard you on the way" means "to caution you concerning the matters of the Law."[126] The prophets are called "The keepers of the commandments,"[127] that is, the guardians of the law. They are also called "witnesses" because it is their duty to warn the people of the consequence of their misdeeds.[128]

This is particularly true of the so-called writing prophets or apostolic prophets, or whatever other generic name

---

[125]Cf. Lev. R. 14:2, p. 301; Mid. Samuel 19:2; cf. A. Heschel, ibid., p. 260.

[126]Mekilta de RSBY ad loc., p. 219.

[127]Mekilta, ba-ḥodesh 6, p. 227.

[128]Num. R. 9:54.

we may choose to confer upon the prophets who flourished between the eighth and sixth centuries, before the present era. A mere skimming of their words should convince even the skeptic of mind. The rabbis on their part have given expression to this view of the purpose of prophecy in a rather bold and stunning passage: "Were it not that the Israelites sinned, they would have received only the five books of the Torah and the book of Joshua alone."[129] In other words, if Israel had obeyed the Law, there would have been no necessity for prophetism. Commenting on the verse, "Slothfulness brings on sleep" (Prov. 19:15), the rabbis quaintly interpret it to mean: "Because they [i.e. the Jews] were slothful [in their observance of the Law] prophecy [which is generally received in a state of the deadening of the physical senses] increased."[130] Here again, prophecy is linked to the need of awakening the people and alerting them to their responsibilities.

It must be pointed out in passing that this view is not to be confused with the once-current view that prophetism is fundamentally a movement of woe.[131] The true prophet is

---

[129] BT Nedarim 22b; cf. Kohel. R. 3:12.

[130] Yalḳ. Shim., ad loc.; Ruth R., petiḥta, 5.

[131] This idea that true prophecy is "unheilprophetie" originated with the Wellhausian school, and it went to the extreme extent of denying the authenticity of the optimistic prophecies found in the pre-exilic prophets. For references, see H. H. Rowley, The Servant of the Lord, p. 125. However, this view fell into disrepute (ibid.). Cf. A. Peake, "The Roots of Hebrew Prophecy and Jewish Apocalyptic," John Rylands Library, VII (1923), 239; Th. C. Vriezen, "Prophecy and Eschatology" (in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, V. I, 1953), passim.

not limited only to "the stick" which he is to raise against the people, but he is also given "the carrot" which he is to wave before the people to attract them to the good and blessed life. He holds out good hope and cheer to the sinning nation, and even the prophecies of doom which he utters are conditional in intent. There are in this way as many prophecies of weal as of woe. According to the rabbis, these prophecies of weal are intended not to be merely enlightening, to reveal to the people what the future holds in store for them, but they, too, are part and parcel of the preaching arsenal of the prophet. In the words of the rabbis: "All the salvations and comforts that the prophets saw, He permitted them to make them public only so that Israel shall toil in the performance of the commandments."[132] In other words, the eschatological aspect of the prophetic message was not of inherent value in itself, as it merely served to satisfy the curiosity of the believer, but what is of far greater vitality is its use as an impelling incentive in the every-day life of the wavering Jew who needs strengthening in his desire to perform his many Jewish obligations. It is no wonder that the rabbis could assert that "all the goods and comforts that the prophets visualized in this world, they visualized them for the repentants,"[133] for the truly righteous has no need to learn about any eschatalogical

---

[132] Yalḳ. Shim., II, 508; cf. Kohel. R. 1:27.

[133] BT Berakhot 34b; Kohel. R. 1:27.

promises. Thus, it would appear that all prophecies of weal are not intended for edification purposes, but rather for serving as an adjunct in the preaching vocation of the prophet.

However, preaching to the sinners or to the would-be sinners was not the sole purpose of prophetism. The prophets were indeed charged with many other tasks as will be shown below. What is more, prophetism as such was originally conceived as a positive good rather than as a mere whip to keep the people in line and within bounds. It owes its inception to a supreme moment in the divine history of the Jewish people during the revelation at Mt. Sinai. At that time the Israelites turned to Moses and said: "Speak thou with us...but let not God speak with us lest we die" (Ex. 20:16). As a reward for this manifestation of profound reverence, God promised them that in the future they would have prophets to receive the divine revelation. This is explicitly stated in the locus classicus of prophecy in the Bible: "A prophet from thy midst...like me the Lord your God will raise up for thee...just as you asked of the Lord your God at Ḥoreb" (Deut. 18:15-18). On the basis of this verse the rabbis with evident justification conclude that "as a reward for their reverence, they merited to have prophets rise for them."[134]

In view of this last consideration, the rabbinic as-

---

[134]Sifre, Deut. 176, p. 221; cf. Mekilta, ba-ḥodesh, 9, p. 237; Mekilta de RSBY, p. 155.

sertion which ascribes the existence of the Prophets to the prevalence of sin in Israel admittedly calls for an explanation. On the one hand, prophetism is viewed as a positive good given to a meritorious people, while on the other hand, prophetism is treated as a mere antidote to a condition which should not exist to begin with. This difficulty will easily resolve itself once attention is drawn to the unquestionable distinction between what prophecy represented in potentiality and what it turned out to be in its actualization. Prophetism was intended to be a part of the religious history of the Jews from the start, but the tenor of its activity was made contingent on the particular state of affairs of the Jewish people. Had the Jewish people been worthy, prophecy would have assumed a different form and would have evolved into a higher spiritual vehicle. That prophecy need not have been a weapon to combat evil, but could just as well have been an edifying and an inspiring force to broaden the spiritual horizons of the righteous is succintly expressed in the rabbinic passage which follows: "Hearken to the words of prophecy so that you will not have to hear words of remonstration; hearken to the words of remonstration so that you will not have to hear words of accusation."[135] Here we see that prophecy is some-

---

[135] PSRK, 14, p. 117b; cf. ibid., p. 11a, ed. Mandelbaum p. 226 where it seems that were the Jews to repent, there would still be room for prophecy to exist as the prophets would then be able to report divine revelations such as the theophany of Ezekiel.

thing distinct from mere preaching against evil. It became denunciatory in character only as a result of the people's failure to listen to the positive message it had to offer.

As it was, there were mainly two compelling reasons dictating its committal to writing. Firstly, its message even though it was evoked by the sinfulness of the people, was possessed of durable value as it remained applicable for similar situations which might arise in the future. Secondly, since a good number of the prophecies were yet to be fulfilled, it had to be written down as an ever living reminder to the skeptic and cynic as well as a source of faith to the believer who would draw strength and inspiration. This is what the rabbis meant by their dictum: "A prophecy which was necessary for future generations was written down."[136] This very reason prompted the rabbis to declare that "the Prophets and the Hagiographa are due to disappear [after the advent of the Messiah], but the Pentateuch will not disappear."[137] That does not at all imply that prophecy will be nonexistent during the Messianic period, for as will be shown, prophecy will be revived[138] during that time. What it means is that this present form of prophecy will have no purpose to serve at that time since all prophecies will have been fulfilled by that time, and there will be no more sin of the present order to battle.

---

[136] BT Mgillah 14a. [137] PT Megillah 1:7, p.70d.

[138] Infra, pp. 264-74.

The prophets as historians. - The preaching phase of the prophetic mission of necessity turns the prophets into historians. It constantly brings them face to face with the social and political realities of the day which they must evaluate in order properly to understand the full import of the message which they have to bring to society. The fact that prophecy views all reality from the perspective of right and wrong does not impair the historical value of its presentation of history. The vivid depiction of the existing state of affairs and their incisive evaluations of its implications coupled with their intermittent retrospective glances into the past and the prospective glimpses into the future bear all the unmistakable earmarks of genuine historiagraphy.

The recording of history stands in need of prophetism for its faithful execution, for only by virtue of prophetism can there be an unerring evaluation of the elusive elements present in all human affairs. Because of this postulate, the rabbis came to consider such recording the exclusive province of prophetism to the point that they were perplexed by the problem of who has been recording all history since the day prophecy ceased to exist. It was this puzzlement which led them to the startling conclusion that it is the prophet Elijah who has been commissioned to continue the recording of human deeds. Elijah was chosen for this task because he is a prophet who did not undergo the process of death as he was translated alive into heaven, and as such he may be regarded as "alive," which

would qualify him to act in the prophetic capacity of historian. All this can be clearly seen from the following two rabbinic passages: "In the past when a man performed a good deed, the prophet would record it. Now when a man performs a good deed, who records it? Elijah..."[139] "In the second year of Aḥaziah Elijah was hidden away and he will not appear until the advent of the Messiah.... But at present he is recording the actions of all the generations."[140] In line with this function of recording history, the prophet was also the maker of history in which he was actively engaged. His constant intervention in state affairs was not the result of his self-esteem in being an astute statesman, but it was part of his divine commission as a divine historian to whom God had revealed the record of human deeds. As such, he was empowered to guide the destinies of king and kingdom. It is therefore natural for a prophet to be consulted before going to war. According to the rabbis, it was a requirement. In fact, Josiah, who was deemed a righteous king, died in battle as a penalty for failing to consult Jeremiah before venturing out to fight the Egyptians who sought passage through his land.[141]

---

[139]Lev. R. 34:8, p. 790, and parallels; cf. BT Kiddushin 70a.

[140]Seder Olam R., chap. 17; cf. M. Friedmann's introduction to Seder Eliahu R., pp. 17ff. What is the purpose of such an invisible record, can only be surmised. It may constitute part of the rabbinic claim that Elijah continues to reveal himself to some of the righteous in every generation. Cf. M. Friedmann, ibid., pp. 27-44. Thus, Elijah may disclose to them some of his recordings. It may also be part of the rabbinic tradition that Elijah will come in pre-Messianic time to straighten out family problems and other matters (Mishna Eduyyot, end).

[141]BT Ta'anit 22b.

Antidote to divination. - The rabbis long ago realized that the world is governed by the principle of checks and balances. They read this truism in the verse, "God has made one thing over against the other" (Kohel. 7:14), which they elaborate to mean that "whatever God created in the world, He created some other thing against it...He created the righteous, the wicked were created..."[142]

Prophetism was not altogether an exception to this universal rule. For one thing, it was called into being as a counterbalance to the once-prevalent practice of seeking oracles and consulting diviners. This fact is plainly apparent in the biblical locus classicus of prophetism: "For the nations which thou shalt possess hearkens unto soothsayers and unto diviners, but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee to do so. A prophet from thy midst... The Lord thy God will raise up" (Deut. 18:14, 15). The rabbis have understood this passage to imply that prophecy was instituted to forestall Israel's likely complaint that the Gentiles "have of whom to inquire, but I have not."[143]

It should be noted, however, that merely because prophecy came to replace divination, it is not justified to conclude that it fulfils the same needs and plays the

---

[142]BT Ḥagigah 15a; PSRK, 30, p. 191a.

[143]Mid. Tannaim, ad loc.; cf. Sifre, ad loc.; Targ. J., ad loc.; cf. Isa. 48:3-8.

selfsame role as divination. Prophecy is to be considered only as a partial substitute for divination by way of compensation and even more so by way of counteraction. Insofar as prophecy incorporates an element of foretelling, it may be treated as a replacement for idolatrous divination, but inasmuch as it endeavors to instill trust and faith in divine justice, it must be considered as an uncompromising opponent of divination. While divination leads man to accept whatever is foreseen for him and to await in resignation whatever is impending, prophecy calls upon man to work for the fulfilment of the good which is prophesied for him and help to bring it about by his good desert, and it exhorts him to avert his prophesied doom by means which are fully at his disposal and within his easy grasp.[144]

In addition, there is a fundamental difference in the manner by which each of them obtains his knowledge of the unknown. The prophet, unlike the diviner, does not employ technical means to learn what is hidden.[145] He maintains a direct line of communication with God, who is the source of all

---

[144] In fact, anyone who accepted a prophecy as fatal and irrevocable was considered guilty of equating prophecy with divination and witchcraft, see Deut. R., Lieberman, p. 45. Cf. "You are a prophet, and a prophet is not an astrologer" (Gen. R. 44:12, p. 433).

[145] Haldar's view to the contrary in his Association of Cult Prophets Amongst Ancient Semites (Uppsala, 1945), passim, is without convincing evidence from the sources. See J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Oxford, 1962), p. 50, and passim.

that is known and unknown. In this respect he is also different from the high priest who makes use of the Urim and Tumim to obtain a revelation. Even though according to rabbinic tradition no high priest may consult the Urim and Tumim unless he possesses the "Holy Spirit,"[146] since he is restricted to this technical means his oracle cannot be classed in the same category as is prophecy. In this connection, it is edifying to point out that according to the rabbis, prophecy differs from the oracle of the Urim and Tumim in one important respect: "Even though the decree of a prophet is revocable, the decree of the Urim and Tumim is irrevocable."[147] In this respect the Urim and Tumim have the same effect as does divination since the oracle of both of them leaves man with no choice but to accept, with nothing to do but accommodate himself to its dictates.

This difference is not to be attributed to the superiority of the Urim and Tumim, but is, rather, the result of the fact that it operates in another area of human happenings. Prophetism as such operates primarily in the sphere of happenings, which is governed by the principles of divine Providence. Consequently, its revelations must be contingent on human behavior. But the Urim and Tumim operate in that area of human occurrences which are either predetermined or are part

---

[146] BT Yoma 73a.

[147] BT Yoma 73b.

of inescapable causality. It therefore follows that their oracle is not subject to change.[148]

From this perspective the prophet, who is the exponent of the Locution, is not the rival of the priest, who is the possessor of the Urim and Tumim, since each deals with an area of human events complementary to that dealt with by the other. The Temple and its order of sacrifices, which is the exclusive domain of the priest, represents the static and orderly laws of creation. In fact, its construction is symbolically patterned after the universe.[149] Only with the setting up of the Tabernacle was the world finally established,[150] inasmuch as its service will provide the spiritual energy necessary for the maintenance and operation of the world at large.[151] That is why it is the priest who is entrusted with the operation of the Urim and Tumim which govern those events which are part of the laws of creation. Prophetism, on the other hand, deals with the dynamics of human deeds and divine justice, with God's providential manifestations in the operation of the world. Knowledge of such facts cannot be ascertained

---

[148]That there are such areas in life the rabbis have acknowledged .e.g. BT Shabbat 156a; BT Mo'ed Ḳaṭan 28a; BT Sota 2a; BT Niddah 16b.

[149]Cf. BT Berakhot 55a; PRE, chap. 3, end; Num. R. 12:16; Tan., pekudei, 2.

[150]Num. R. 12:13. This applies also to the Temple: Tan., Buber, terumah, 8, p. 94; Yalḳ. Shim., II, 186.

[151]ADRN, chap. 4. Because of this idea, a deterioration in the quality of many products took place following the des-

by the manipulation of any technical or mechanical means which are, in a sense, themselves part of the established order of things. Only the direct and spontaneous communication of God to the prophet can reveal to us the Providential interventions and manifestations in the history of human life. This is what sets off the prophet not only from his antagonist, the diviner, but also from his counterpart, the priest!

In this connection, it is worth noting that, according to one opinion, the announcing of the oracle of the Urim and Tumim is not preceded by the phrase "Thus saith the Lord"[152] which is frequently used by the prophets in proclaiming a prophecy. Apparently, this phrase can not properly grace the oracle of the Urim and Tumim because it does not represent the particularized will of Providence and Its direct decision at this time as is the case with the prophetic message.

As fighters of idolatry. - Prophetism being a counterforce to divination is merely part of the greater complex of the prophetic battle against idolatry of which divination is only a single phase. It is commonplace knowledge, as even a casual study of the Prophets will readily reveal, that fighting idolatry was one of the main functions assumed by prophetism. The prophets were truly the greatest iconoclasts of history, inasmuch as they had to struggle against the lure of the entrenched idols of an entire world.

---

truction of the Temple, as recorded in Mishna, Soṭa 9:12,13. According to another rabbinic tradition, the destruction of the Temple even affected the quantity and quality of the rain (BT Baba Batra 25b).

[152] BT Yoma 73a.

The rabbis have not failed to grasp the significance of this difficult assignment. The verse, "Thou shalt not curse God" (Ex. 22:27), also enjoins, according to a rabbinic interpretation, against reviling the prophets. Elaborating on this interpretation, the question is raised: "Why did He exhort concerning them?" The answer given is: "Because they warn us against other gods!"[153] From this comment we get the unmistakable impression that the distinctive merit of the prophets was their fight for pure monotheism, and as such, reviling them is tantamount to reviling God Himself.

The relentless war which the prophets waged against idolatry was not aimed directly against idolatry solely because it stood for a plurality of gods, but more so against the immorality and depravity which polytheism with its deification of countless natural forces represented. Monotheism, to the prophets, was more than the mere belief in a single god; it was rather the belief in a unique God who, as the supreme author and leader, was just and moral, and in whose ways man must follow. Accordingly, the strenuous prophetic struggle against injustice and immorality was, in a true sense, an integral part of their fight against idolatry.[154]

---

[153] Ex. 31:7; cf. Tan., mishpatim, 12. Cf. Deut. R. 2:11, where God told Isaiah that idolatry was the first sin that the Jews were warned against through Moses. Regarding Ezekiel's fight against idolatry, see Num. R. 9:54. Cf. Mid. Ps. 138:1.

[154] Jeremiah, the eloquent preacher against idolatry (cf. Ex. R. 16:2), was consecrated as "a prophet to the nations"

The identification of vice with idolatry, which is already indicated in the Pentateuch (Lev. 18:3,24,27), has been reechoed by the rabbis in a variety of ways: "Which commandment is equal in weight to all other commandments? Say, this is [the prohibition of] idolatry."[155] When the rabbis want to describe the evil of a certain trait or deed, they do so by making it the equivalent of idolatry.[156] The equivalency which the rabbis establish between idolatry and sin in general or certain sins in particular is not to be minimized as a mere flight of the imagination. It is their considered view that idolatry is truly representative of vice, that it was interlinked with injustice and immorality.[157] Hence,

---

(Jer. 1:5), which, according to the rabbis, meant: "To the Jews who behave as the nations (Sifre, Deut., 175, p. 221). Thus, the fight against evil is described as a fight against paganism. Cf. I. Epstein, The Faith of Israel (London, 1954), p. 285; J. Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia, 1959), p. 247.

[155] BT Horayot 8a; cf. BT Nedarim 25a; BT Ta'anit 5a. Cf. "Whosoever denies idolatry is termed a Jew (BT Megillah 13a). The fundamental meaning of the verb "to command" refers to the prohibition of idolatry (BT Sanhedrin 56b; Gen. R. 16:16).

[156] E. g. For not giving charity: BT Ketubot 68a; for not giving the heave offering: Lev. R. 15:6, p. 333; for denying a trust: Tosef., shebuot 3:6; for yielding to the evil inclination: PT Nedarim 9:1, p. 41b; for lying: Bt Sanhedrin 92a; for haughtiness: BT Soṭa 4b.

[157] Cf. PRE, chap. 9, "When Israel trust in God, their Creator, they are blessed and sweet, and the world has benefit from them. But when they depart from their Creator and trust in idols, they are cursed and become bad." Cf. Mid. Tannaim, Hoffmann, p. 99, where idolatry is made synonymous with all evil. Cf. ibid., p. 97.

the prophetic fight against idolatry had to be fought on the battlefields of justice and morality. From this perspective, the rabbis could unhesitatingly state: "Whosoever avows idolatry denies the Ten Commandments, all that Moses was commanded and all that the prophets were commanded."[158]

That the credit for identifying idolatry as the root of all evil, and the God idea as the source of all good belongs to the prophets, is clearly revealed in an illuminating rabbinic passage:

> R. Simlai expounded: six hundred and thirteen commandments were told to Moses...Came David and reduced them to eleven...Came Isaiah and reduced them to six ...Came Micah and reduced them to three...Again came Isaiah and reduced them to two...Came Habakkuk and reduced them to one, as it says: 'The righteous will live by his faith' (Hab. 2:4). 159

Thus, as prophetism was arduously seeking to discover which of the commandments are all-inclusive of the others so that it could concentrate on them in particular, it finally came to the conclusion that it is faith in God. In other words, the denial of idolatrous polytheism on the negative side and the espousal of ethical monotheism on the positive side constitute the basic cause of prophetism, while all else is merely particular manifestations of it.

---

[158] Sifre, Num., 111, p. 116; Mekilta, pisḥa 5, p. 15.

[159] BT Makkot 24a; cf. Tan., shoftim 9, ed. Buber p. 32,33. From the context in which this passage is placed in the Tan. ibid. it is clear that this single principle of Habakkuk has to do with the prohibition of idolatry, Cf. S. Edels' Novellae to BT Makkot 24a; cf. J. Albo, Ikkarim, part 3, chap. 30.

That it is the God idea which is the great contribution of prophetism is made clear in a quaint rabbinic observation: "Before the prophets have praised Thee, Thou hast been great, but after the prophets have praised Thee, Thou hast become mighty great!"[160] Thus, it is prophetism which has succeeded in its struggle to discredit idolatry so that the true greatness of God may thus be revealed.

The prophet's place in the cult. - The rabbis do not picture the prophet to have been an accessory of the sacerdotal caste or to have been in any way connected with the ritual of the sanctuary. Samuel's sacrificing of the lamb as a whole-burnt offering before setting out to war against the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:9) is considered by the rabbis to have been an irregular act, a prerogative on one occasion only.[161]

Nevertheless, the prophet plays a distinct role in the relationship between God and His people. He is a functionary, but without a prescribed set of rules; he is a minister, but without the benefit of an established sanctuary. Unlike the priest, whose dignity derives from his office,[162] the prophet derives his office from his dignity. Unlike the priest,

---

[160] Mid. Ps. 104:4.

[161] PT Megillah, 1:14, p. 72c; Lev. R. 22:9, p. 520.

[162] Cf. "When they [i.e. the priests] have their vestments on, their priesthood is upon them; when they do not have their vestments on, their priesthood is not upon them" (BT Zebahim 17b).

who may at times act as the representative of his people,[163] the prophet acts as if he were the people in miniature. The prophet's being personifies the very life of his people and it breathes with the needs and feelings of his people. The prophet incorporates in his inner life and in his outer activity the totality of Israel. The rabbis in their peculiar idiom aptly phrased it: "Samuel wrapped himself in the cloak of Israel,"[164] This description when divested of its imagery simply means that Samuel took on the identity of Israel.

Both, the priest and the prophet, may effectuate atonement for the sins of the people, but each one brings it about in an altogether different way. The priest officiating

---

[163] Mishna Yoma 1:5; cf. BT Yoma 19a; BT Nedarim 35b.

[164] Yalk. Shim., II, 103; cf. "Samuel put on the cloak of Israel" (PT Ta'anit 2:7, p. 65d). That the prophet must consider himself to be the equal of his people, and not a separate part of it, is vividly illustrated by the distinction which the rabbis find between two prophets. When the Holy Spirit took possession of Zechariah b. Yehoida "he stood above the people" (2 Chron. 24:20), that is, he considered himself superior to the people, and as a result, he was killed. Whereas Yahaziel was different, as "the Holy Spirit came upon him in the midst of the congregation" (2 Chron. 20:14), which signifies that he considered himself as a part of the congregation (Kohel. R. 10:5). The moment a prophet loses his community of feeling with his people, he can no longer exercise his prophetic office. This is what happened to Elijah after he had denounced the Jewish people to God (1 Kings 19:14); he was told to appoint Elisha as a prophet in his stead as he was no longer fit to continue as a prophet. In the words of the rabbis, God said to him: "I do not want your prophetism!" (Mekilta, pisha, 1, p. 4).

in the Temple primarily as the agent of the Divine, administers atonement as part of a prescribed ritual.[165] The prophet, on the other hand, by enlarging his personal life to encompass the whole gamut of his people's weal and woe, is thereby transformed into his people's alter ego. Hence, the atonement wrought by him whether by means of prayer or by virtue of his suffering is directly attributable to his people.[166] He speaks with their aggregate voice and he acts with their combined force. It is thus no wonder that the rabbis consider Moses to have been of weight equal to six hundred thousand Jews.[167] What is evidently meant is that Moses as supreme prophet embodied the sum-total of all the thoughts and feelings of each and every Jew at the time.

From this perspective, the prophet's prayer is not to be treated as an act of intercession, as he is not praying on behalf of someone external to him, but it is to be viewed as the direct prayer of the people praying, as it were, through his mouth inasmuch as he is actuated by their sinful state and remorse with which he identifies himself. In a sense, he is not praying for his people; he is praying for himself as he is the people.[168]

---

[165] BT Yoma 19a,b.

[166] Cf. PT Sanhedrin 11:7, p. 30c; cf. BT Sanhedrin 39a.

[167] Mekilta, shirah, 1, p. 116; Cant. R. 1:64; cf. Ex.R.44, end.

[168] Cf. BT Pesaḥim 117a where the "I" of the Psalms is discussed and taken as the national ego. Cf. BT Yoma 52a.

However, there is also another side to the person of the prophet. While acting as the alter ego of his people, he also serves as the mouthpiece of God, as an instrument of the divine pathos, alternatingly taking sides in this difficult dual role in which he is cast. But there is an essential difference in the nature of these two capacities. When the prophet lays before God the woes of his people he assumes in full, as has been said, the posture of his people and acts as its coextension. Such is, however, not at all the case with the prophet when he acts as God's spokesman. In this capacity, his person never becomes coextensive with God. He remains at all times a distinctly separate entity no matter how much he may endeavor to identify himself with the divine will and pathos. He can never become at one with God, not even under the overwhelming impact of the prophetic experience. The prophet may at times disintegrate under the influence of the prophetic spell, he may lose his conscious identity,[169] but he cannot assume even in part the personality of God.

Because of this total identification of the prophet with his people, it becomes self-evident why the prophet may appropriate all the symbols which characterize God's relationship with Israel. Whatever epithet depicts the relationship between God and Israel is ipso facto applicable to the prophet as well. The reference in the Bible to the prophets as the Lord's servants, which has been adopted in the liturgy, is in the eyes of the rabbis a mere counterpart of the Jewish people as a whole. "The Israelites are called servants, as it

---

[169] Cf. Mid. Ps. 90:4; and cf. A. Heschel's view of this

is written; 'For the children of Israel are servants unto me' (Lev. 25:55), and so are the prophets called servants, as it is written: 'He reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets' (Amos 3:7)."[170] Similarly, the description of Israel as a woman in its relationship with God, which is common both in the Bible and in rabbinic literature,[171] has also been adopted by the rabbis for describing the prophets' relationship with God. "Why are the prophets compared to women? Just like a woman who is not embarrassed to demand the needs of the household from her husband, the prophets likewise are not embarrassed to demand the needs of Israel from the Holy One, blessed be He."[172] Thus, the prophet's apparent self-assurance in his dealings with God derives from the fact that he appears not so much as the representative of Israel but rather as its alternate, assuming its position as the spouse of God and speaking with its collective voice unflinchingly and without embarrassment.

---

passage in his The Prophets, p. 339, note 23.

[170] Cant. R. 1:39; cf. Sifre to Deut. 3:23, p. 42. It is therefore no wonder that the problem of the meaning of the "servant of the Lord" in Isaiah as to whom it refers is hardly soluble, for there is a constant shifting from the individual to the nation and back. Cf. J. Lindblom, The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah, (Lund, 1951); cf. Isa. 49:3.

[171] E. g. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 2:4. Cant. R. 1:37; Deut. R. 2, end.

[172] PSRK, 12, p. 101a; Cant. R. 1:44. Cf. PSRK, loc. cit. where the "God fearing woman" of Prov. 31:30 is applied to Moses. Cf. Pesikta R., 10, p. 41a, where the violation of the Locution is compared in a pseudo-legalistic manner to the

This concept of the prophet acting as the alter ego of his people will provide us with a profound and compelling reason for the barring of a Jew from being a prophet to the Gentiles. The rabbis derive it from the verse, "A prophet from thy midst...will the Lord thy God raise up for thee" (Deut. 18:15). The phrase "for thee" implies "but not for the Gentiles." The rabbis continue: "But how do I explain: 'A prophet to the nations I appoint thee' (Jer. 1:5)? This refers to the Jews who behave as a pagan nation."[173] Thus, despite the many prophecies that the prophets delivered about the pagan nations, they are not considered as prophets to the nations. For their prophecies about the pagans were delivered to the Jews, not to the pagans.

In view of the fact that the prophet must act as the surrogate of his people, it becomes clear why a Jew cannot be a prophet to the nations. Since he cannot fully identify himself with the complex of another people, he cannot possibly qualify as prophet to an alien people.

Not even Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh (Jon. 1:2), may be considered as an exception, for it was not part of his mission to preach to the people of Nineveh about their wrong-

---

violation of a woman, alloting similar penalties to the one as to the other. This entire concept was touched upon by H. Knight in his The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness, p. 140, note 2. He takes note of the fact that Jeremiah employs the terms of seduction and violation with regard to some of his prophecies.

[173] Sifre, ad loc.

doings and to move them to repentance. His task consisted solely in proclaiming a revealed fact, the impending doom of the city of Nineveh. That this proclamation made the people realize that they were sinful and so decided to repent was the result of their own initiative, and is to their eternal glory.

Jonah was not acting in the full capacity of the prophet as the prophecy which he was to bring to Nineveh was purely informative in character, rather than reformative in purpose. He was charged with the task of being merely an announcer of a divine communication, something which represents, at best, a limited aspect of the prophetic office. Hence, Jonah cannot be treated as a "prophet to the Gentiles."[174]

---

[174]Cf. Bereshit R., Albeck, p. 59. Cf. Num. R. 14:22, Cf. Num. R. 18:17, where the Book of Jonah is considered to be in a class by itself, and is not an integral part of the "Twelve Prophets."

CHAPTER VII

THE AUTHORITY OF THE PROPHET

The prophet is endowed with singular powers and he enjoys unique prerogatives. With the exception of the prohibition of idolatry, he is empowered to suspend temporarily the operation of any scriptural law. This is hermeneutically derived by the rabbis from the verse, "Unto him [i.e. the true prophet] you shall listen" (Deut. 18:15).[1] It also has its roots in the soil of precedent. One such instance is the case of Elijah's offering a sacrifice on Mt. Carmel at a time when it was forbidden to do so outside the precincts of the chosen sanctuary on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem.[2]

This authorization, however, is not granted to the prophet to be arbitrarily used by him at his discretion by virtue of his prophetic position, but he must claim it in each instance as a direct divine mandate to this effect. "But how was Elijah offering a sacrifice during the period of the prohibition against Bamot [i.e. high places] ? Said R. Simlai: the Locution told him..."[3] It is self-evident from this passage that the prophet has no blanket authoriza-

---

[1]Sifre, ad loc., p. 221.

[2]BT Yebamot 90b; BT Sanhedrin 89b,90a; Lev. R.22:9, p. 518, and parallels.

[3]PT Ta'anit 2:8, p. 65d; Lev. R. 22:9, p. 518. Cf. E. Urbach, "Law and Prophecy" (Heb.), Tarbiz, XVIII (1946), 5.

tion to suspend any law unless he is in receipt of an express divine directive.

However, the prophet is empowered to claim such a prophetic authorization only in the instance where the suspension of a law is intended to benefit the ultimate cause of the faith. For, under given circumstances, it can easily be demonstrated that the temporary abrogation of a law may help to strengthen the faith as a whole, or it may help to close a breach in the observance of a particular law. This restriction imposed upon the prophetic authority seems to be clearly implied in the rabbinic comment upon the above-mentioned case of Elijah: "It is different, since it was for the sake of checking matters."[4]

This proviso, however, seems to have reference only to such instances where the prophet calls upon someone else to break a law. But if the prophet alone is called upon by God to transgress a law, he must do so even when this act may not have any apparent benefit for the preservation of any part of the faith. This can be inferred from Elijah's partaking of the meat brought to him by the ravens (1 Kings

---

[4] BT Yebamot 90b. This will explain why the rabbis did not apply this power of the prophet to temporarily suspend a law in answering the difficulty of Elisha's ordering the destruction of fruit-bearing trees in the war against Moab (2 Kings 3:19), which is contrary to law (Deut. 20:19). Instead, they went to great lengths to make this law inapplicable to Moab (Tan., Pinhas, 3). Apparently, the rabbis did not feel that this act was intended to benefit the cause of the faith, and because of it, the prophet is without power to temporarily suspend a law. But cf. Radak to 2 Kings 3:19 and Meiri to BT Sanhedrin, end of chap. 10, p. 326.

17:3-6), which, according to the rabbis, was not kosher, yet he was permitted to eat it by virtue of an express divine Locution.[5] In this case it does not at all seem likely that it had any bearing on the strengthening of any part of the faith. Nevertheless, he was permitted to break a law so long as it did not involve any one else. We are thus drawn to the conclusion that there is a distinct difference between the divine commandment given to the prophet himself and that given to him to be delivered to the people. With regard to the latter, he can only act qua prophet. As such, his power to break a law is limited by the very nature of his office to such instances which will tend to enhance the faith, for the defense of which he has been appointed. With regard to the former, however, he is not acting under the strict mandate of his prophetic office. His obedience is not to a prophet, but rather to God Himself, and the power of God cannot be circumscribed. In brief, the authority of the prophet speaking in the name of God to the people is of a different order from the authority of God speaking directly to a person.

Authority. - The prophetic authority is not limited exclusively to the religious domain. Its extent is sweeping and all-inclusive. He is invested with the power to speak on behalf of God even in private matters. In this respect the prophet holds, in a way, powers similar to those held by the king. While in the religious domain the sages share similar powers,[6]

---

[5] BT Ḥullin 5a. See Z.H.Chajes, Torat Neviim (Zolkiew,1836), chap. IV, p.9a.

[6] BT Yebamot 90b.

they have not been granted powers in the private sphere of life paralleling those which the prophet enjoys.

Disregarding the injunction of a prophet makes one liable to the penalty of heavenly death, as it is written: "If there is anyone who will not hearken unto my words which he [i.e. the prophet] will speak in my name, I will hold him accountable" (Deut. 18:19).[7] This is exemplified by a case on record: "A certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow through the word of God 'please strike me' but the man refused to strike him. Then he said to him 'because thou hast not listened to the voice of God, behold, as soon as thou takest leave from me a lion shall slay thee,' and as he walked away from him, a lion found him and slew him" (1 Kings 20:35,36).[8]

---

[7] Mishna Sanhedrin 11:5.

[8] BT Sanhedrin 89a,90b. An additional example is cited in PT Sanhedrin 11:7, p. 30c, wherein Aḥab died in war because he disobeyed a prophetic injunction. Cf. Sifre, Deut., 192, p. 233. A rather curious question has been raised in this connection. Such being the case, all the Jews in the desert of Sinai who have heard the commandments directly from Moses should, then, be liable to the penalty of heavenly death upon breaking any law. (Minḥat Ḥinukh, Comm. to Sefer ha-Ḥinukh, command. 516). However, upon closer examination, this line of reasoning will prove to be specious and faulty. The transmission of the commandments by Moses was not in the form of a series of prophetic injunctions, each with a specific instance in mind to apply to a particular situation. These commandments were promulgated in the form of a set of divine laws to be universally applied to every situation to which they have reference. Adherence to these laws was not grounded in the fact that they were prophetic injunctions, but they derive their binding power from the value and merit inherent in each one of them. The nature of the validity of the prophetic injunction, on the other hand, is not directly based

For this reason Abraham was under compulsion to carry out Sarah's order that he send away Hagar and her son. According to the rabbis, Abraham had to obey because Sarah was a prophetess. In rabbinic exegesis, the phrase "unto her voice," in the verse "whatever Sarah tells thee hearken unto her voice" (Gen. 21:12), refers to her prophetic voice.[9]

This demand for unequivocal obedience to the word of the prophet under pain of heavenly death is not limited to concrete matters of "do" or "don't," but it also includes matters of pure belief, of having trust or not having trust in the prophet's word. This apparently was the case of the royal officer who was trampled to death because he doubted Elisha's prophecy that by the next day there would be an abundance of food in Samariah (2 Kings 7:18-20).[10] This may be the ultimate reason why, according to a rabbinic interpretation, upon hearing a good prophecy, the listener is required to respond with "Amen."[11] While in the case of a prophetic injunction to a person, belief in the prophet's word is manifested by either obeying or not obeying, in the case of a prophetic message which does not involve any action acceptance can be demonstrated only by the response "Amen."

---

on their objective value, but it rather issues from the subjective authority of the prophetic office. In consequence, the penalty for transgressing a Pentateuchal law will vary with the relative value of the particular law, whereas the penalty for transgressing a prophetic injunction will always be the same because of their identical validity.

[9]Targ.J., ad loc; Seder Olam R., chap. 2; Ex. R.1:1; cf. Gen. R.45:3.

[10]Cf. BT Sanhedrin 90a,b. See D.Hoffmann's Comment. on Deut.18:19.

[11]Sifre, Deut., 320, p. 367; cf. Ruth R., petihta, 4.

This requirement of necessity deals only with prophecies of weal since these are given unconditionally and cannot be altered. Whereas in the case of prophecies of woe, which may be revoked by the grace of God, or may be cancelled by a change in the moral or religious situation since they are conditional in nature,[12] the response "Amen" is not called for. On the contrary, what is called for is an immediate resolution to work for the undoing of the prophecy in question by thoughts of repentance and plans for improvement. The response, then, is to become manifested in subsequent action aimed at bringing about a change in the conditions upon which this prophecy of woe has been predicated.

This requirement of total obedience to the prophetic word is reflected in the term "Divrei Kabbalah" by which the rabbis make frequent reference to the Prophets[13] and, by extension, to the Hagiographa,[14] the exact meaning of which has baffled writers on this subject. The suggestion has been made, and has gained wide currency, that the vocalization of this term be changed to "Divrei Kebhalah," that is, words of complaint, as the prophetic message was often in the nature of complaints

---

[12]PT Sanhedrin 11:7, p. 30b; PT Ta'anit 2:1, p. 65b; Mid. Ps. 13:1.

[13]E. g. Mishna Ta'anit 2:1, and freq.

[14]E. g. Tosef., Yoma 2:4, and freq.; but cf. Soferim 18:4. See S. Lieberman, Tosefta ki-Fshuta, order Mo'ed, p. 1054, notes 55-56.

and accusations.[15] But all this is unnecessary once we examine one rather neglected meaning of the root ḲBL. In Aramaic, as well as in rabbinic Hebrew,[16] this verb has the meaning of "to listen" or "to obey." In fact the very verse in Deut. 18:15 which enjoins us to obey the prophet is rendered in the Targumim by the verb ḲBL. The words of the Prophets are therefore aptly termed "Divrei Ḳabbalah," words of obedience, that is, words calling for obedience, because this term fully characterizes the true authority of the prophet as one who must be obeyed.[17]

The Law and the Prophets. - Just as the prophet is without power to revoke any existing law, he is likewise without authority to promulgate any newly-revealed law of a permanent validity.[18] The rabbis, prompted by the concluding verse of the Book of Leviticus, "These are the commandments which God

---

[15] Cf. B. Ashkenazi, Shitah Meḳubetzet, Baba Ḳama 2b; cf. Even Shoshan's Hebrew Dictionary, under this term. For a summary of the various explanations given to this term, see E. Urbach, "Law and Prophecy" (Heb.), Tarbiz, XVIII (1946), 12, note 97.

[16] E. g. Seder Eliahu R., chap. 20, p. 114, and freq. As to the Aramaic use of the root KBL, cf. Rashi to Gen. 37:27.

[17] Cf. Gen. R. 84:10, p. 1012, where the use of the Biblical verb ShM' the frequent equivalent of the Aramaic ḲBL, is considered to be characteristic of prophetism.

[18] Cf. Sefer Ḥasidim, ed. Wistinetzki, no. 1840, that for this reason the prophets do not employ the absolute negation "Lo," which as a rule is employed by the Pentateuch, and instead use the regular negative imperative "Al," because the first has the force of permanency, while the last has in it the element of request and is more in the nature of ad hoc. Cf. BT Erubin 17b.

commanded Moses,..." assert "that no prophet is permitted to initiate any law from hereon."[19] Similarly, commenting on the verse, "For this commandment which I command thee this day...is not in heaven" (Deut. 30:11,12), the rabbis amplify: "Moses said to them that you should not think that a different Moses will arise and he will bring us a different Law from heaven, that is why I am informing you in advance that 'it is not in heaven.'"[20]

Both these hermeneutical derivations are also applied by the rabbis to exclude from the province of prophecy the possibility of consulting a prophet to bring back by means of an oracle a forgotten oral law. In a rabbinic tradition this is what happened during the period of mourning for Moses. Three thousand oral laws were forgotten, but Joshua, Eleazar and Phineas refused to inquire from God to reveal these laws anew on the grounds that the Torah is no longer in heaven and the prophet is unable to offer a revelation concerning a law.[21]

---

[19] Sifra, ad loc.; BT Shabbat 104a, and parallels.

[20] Deut. R., ad loc, 8:6. Cf. B. J. Bamberger, "Revelation of Torah After Sinai," HUCA, XVI (1941), 97.

[21] BT Temurah 16a. We find exceptions to this rule in post-Talmudic times. A notable instance is that of R. Jacob of Marvège (13th cent.) who by dream oracles clarified the disposition of many laws. These decisions were published under the presumptuous title Inquiries and Responses from Heaven (Heb.), the latest edition of which has been critically edited and annotated by R. Margoliot, Jerusalem, 1957. However, this and similar examples constitute an obvious aberration, and are not indicative of the mainstream of rabbinic tradition.

Furthermore, no revelation can be brought to bear upon the decision of a law when there is a division of opinion amongst the sages. When R. Eliezer invoked a "Bat Ḳol" (a heavenly voice) in favor of his legal opinion, R. Joshua stood up and proclaimed that "it is not in heaven," which R. Jeremiah expands into: "The Torah was already given on Mt. Sinai and we do not take notice of a Bat Ḳol!"[22]

This principle that the Law is fully removed from the divine sphere and wholly entrusted to the minds of the sages is poignantly illustrated in a famous Aggadic account. We are told of a difference of opinion that took place in the heavenly academy regarding a certain question of leprosy, ranging God, as it were, on one side and the entire heavenly academy on the opposite side, whereupon it was decided to consult the opinion of the sage Rabba bar Naḥmani to settle the argument! This sage decided in favor of God.[23] Thus we

---

[22]BT Baba Metzia 59b; PT Mo'ed Ḳaṭan 3:1, p. 81d; cf PT Sanhedrin 4:2, p. 22a. But cf. BT Yebamot 14a, and parallels, and Tosafot, ad loc., where the question is raised as to why the law has been decided according to Bet Hillel because of a "Bat Ḳol" in their favor,in view of the fact that a similar "Bat Ḳol" was of no avail when it was to the favor of R. Eliezer in his argument with his fellows. However, what needs to be understood is that while prophecy invalidating a law, is considered false, making its author liable to punishment (cf. BT Sanhedrin 89b, 90a), a prophecy or a "Bat Ḳol" deciding the correct interpretation or disposition of a law,even though it is without binding power, is nevertheless treated as a valid reality. Thus, in the dispute between R. Eliezer and his fellows, the rabbis chose to disregard the "Bat Ḳol" because it did not accord with their view of the law. However, in deciding the law according to Bet Hillel, the rabbis accepted the "Bat Ḳol" not as the source of their decision, but rather as a reassurance and approval of what they had arrived at by their own reasoning processes.

[23]BT Baba Metzia 86a.

clearly see that the Law is entirely given over to man and it is out of the hands of God, and that even God needs the support of man. What makes this case even more a manifest declaration of independence by the rabbis in matters of law is the fact that in the end the rabbis decided the law against the view held by God, as it were, and as supported by Rabba bar Nachmani.[24]

This principle is touchingly described in a simple rabbinic homily, wherein the rabbis draw a contrast between a normal transaction and the giving of the Law. Although in an ordinary transaction the seller is not sold together with the article which he sells, in the giving of the Law, God, as it were, was sold with the Law.[25] Thus, when He gave the Law, He became bound by it as well. He has given up the right to His own reinterpretation so long as the Law remains the possession of man, that is, for the duration of the contract of sale.[26]

To demonstrate in a nutshell the rabbinic view of the irrelevancy of prophecy to law, mention should be made of the fact that oftentimes when a sage offered an opinion which was neither founded on a source nor supported by reason, it evoked

---

[24]Mishna Nega'im 4:11; Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, ṭum'at tzora'at 2:9, and see J. Karo, Kesef Mishneh, ad loc.

[25]Ex. R. 33:7; cf. ibid. 33:8. Cf. M. Silberg, Kakh Darko Shel Talmud, p. 70.

[26]As to the Messianic period, cf. Lev. R. 13:3, p. 278, and ed. note on p. 295, n.2; Mid. Ps. 146:4, and ed. note thereto.

the skeptical and quasi-sarcastic remark: "These words are nothing but words of prophecy."[27]

At this juncture a qualifying observation needs to be brought out. Despite this apparently uncompromising exclusion of divine interference from the province of law, the divine factor played a distinct and decisive role. It was barred from entering through the front door, by denying the right to direct divine intervention in deciding a law, yet it gained admittance through the back door by considering divine guidance as a worthy aid to the sage in arriving at the correct decision. The divine element is not recognized as an independent entity in the realm of law, and cannot operate as such, but it may exercise its influence through the medium of the sage by illuminating him and guiding him to correct decisions.

To start with, retention of one's learning is considered a divine gift.[28] Moses himself, we are told, "At first used to learn Torah, but he would forget it, until it was given to him as a gift."[29] David prayed for divine aid that he should not forget what he had learned.[30] But divine aid was important above all in the ability to arrive at the correct decision in law. That one's opinion becomes the accepted and regnant view is a result of divine assistance.[31]

---

[27]BT Yoma 60b, and parallels. See Rashi, ad loc., but cf. Tosafot, ad loc.

[28]BT Megillah 6b.

[29]BT Nedarim 38a.

[30]Sifre, Num., 119, p. 143.

[31]BT Sota 21a, and Rashi, ad loc.; cf. BT Yoma 26a; cf. Tan., Buber, miḳetz, p. 193.

The description of David as "God is with him" (1 Sam 16:18) is taken by the rabbis to signify that "the law is always decided in accordance with his opinion."[32] It is therefore no wonder that there are prayers for divine aid in arriving at the proper halakhic conclusion, such as the touching prayer of R. Nehuniah ben Hakanah who prayed before entering the academy: "May it be Thy wil...that I shall not err in matters of Halakha...and I shall not declare clean what is defiled nor declare defiled what is clean; neither shall my colleagues err in matters of Halakha..."[33] In view of this indirect but potent role of the Divine in Halakhic matters, it is not at all surprising to find many instances where the rabbis describe the discovery of the correct answer as an illumination from God.[34]

In this light we gain insight into the various rabbinic statements giving the learning of Palestine and its sages superior standing. Assertions such as: "The air of the Land of Israel makes one wise,"[35] or "There is no Torah like the

---

[32] BT Sanhedrin 93b; Ruth R. 4:4. This may explain how the words, "...is from God" (Prov. 16:11), are interpreted by the rabbis to refer to "the Halakhot" (Yalk. Shim., ad loc.; but cf. PT Horayot 3:3, p. 48c).

[33] BT Berakhot 28b.

[34] PT Megillah 1:7, p. 70d; Gen. R. 15:2, p.137; Lev. R. 29:4, p.673, and cf. variants and ed. note; Lam. R. 1:48. This expression "and God opened his eyes" which figures in these passages should not be dismissed as a hyperbolism. It is used by the rabbis as the equivalent of the Biblical verse, "And God opened her eyes" (Gen. 21:19), which treats of an actual instance of a divine revelation (Gen. R.53:19). Such modes of divine aid were claimed by a number of rabbis of post-Talmudic times. Cf. A. Heschel, "Inspiration in the Middle Ages" (Heb.), Alexander Marx Jubilee Vol. (New York, 1950), pp.175-208.

[35] BT Baba Batra 158a.

Torah of the Land of Israel,"[36] or "One of them [Palestinian scholars] is as [good as] two of ours [Babylonian scholars],"[37] all go to prove that divine aid is necessary even in academic endeavors, and that such aid is more likely to be had in Palestine wherein dwells the Divine Presence. It may not be too bold to suggest that this may be the rationalization for the law which makes Palestine the only place wherein rabbinic ordination may be conferred.[38] Thus, ordination which stands in need of some form of divine illumination can be attained only in Palestine just as prophetism, which is the supreme example of the attainment of divine revelation, is conferred only in Palestine.[39]

The Prophets as a legal source-book. - Since no new revelation of law is possible after the passing of Moses, it becomes self-evident that the prophetic books cannot serve as a source of law. The rabbis themselves have come to this identical conclusion as formulated in their well-known dictum: "We cannot learn laws from the Prophets."[40]

---

[36] Sifre, Deut., 37, p.71; Lev.R.13:5, p.282, and parallels.

[37] BT Ketubot 75a.

[38] PT Bikkurim 3:3, p. 65d; BT Sanhedrin 14a.

[39] Mekilta, bo, 1, p. 2, and parallels.

[40] BT Yoma 71b, and parallels; cf. BT Yoma 80a. According to Z. H. Chajes, this statement has reference only to the derivation of laws from the Prophets by means of the "gezerah shavah" (Torat Neviim, part 2, chap. 6).

However, this apparently hard and fast rule seems to have been ignored by the rabbis when they make full use of numerous verses from the Prophets and the Hagiographa as proof-texts for diverse laws, thus treating the Prophets and the Hagiographa without any qualms as legitimate source books of law.[41] Of course, a substantial number of these proof-texts can be summarily dismissed by treating them as one more instance of the oft-used rabbinic device of Asmakhta, employing a verse as a mere peg upon which to hang a rabbinically-inspired law in order to enhance its authority. But there will still remain a goodly number of laws which would not fall in this category as they are not of rabbinic vintage, but they seem to have their origin in these prophetic proof-texts.

Now, in several instances the rabbis themselves sensed this difficulty. When a verse in Ezekiel was cited as the source of a certain law, the objection was raised: "Before Ezekiel came, who said it?" To solve this problem, the rabbis conclude: "It was an oral law, but Ezekiel came and based it upon a verse."[42] Hence some of those proof-texts may be

---

[41] These run literally into the scores. To make reference to only a small sampling: BT Berakhot 6b;9b;10b; 12a;14a;22b;25a;30a;31a;32b;;35b etc.; BT Shabbat 82a; BT Yoma 22b;76b; BT Rosh ha-Shanah 22b etc. Cf. E. Urbach, "Law and Prophecy" (Heb.), Tarbiz, XVIII (1946), 1-27, who overwhelmed by these numerous instances, comes to the questionable conclusion that this principle that no law may be derived from the Prophets is not held by many of the sages.

[42] BT Yoma 71b, and parallels.

placed in this category of laws given orally to Moses which were subsequently recorded by the prophets. Thus, in many an instance when the rabbis make use of a prophetic verse as the source of a certain law, what they are obliquely saying is that in view of the fact that the prophet cannot reveal a new law, this law which the verse contains must then of necessity be an oral law which the prophet recorded.[43]

However, not all laws under consideration will easily fit into this neat scheme as there are such laws for which the rabbis cite the Prophets as proof-texts, but which are not accorded the status of oral laws originally given to Moses. In fact, the rabbis have a special term for some of them "divrei kabbalah."[44]

This brings us to a third category of laws which the rabbis base upon the Prophets. In the rabbinic view, the prophet led a double life, qua prophet, when under the influence of the divine Locution, but also qua sage, when engaged in studying and in interpreting the Law.[45] In this latter capacity the prophets constituted a link in the chain of Tradition, in the transmission of the Law, as stated by the rabbis in the opening Mishna of Aboth. As such, the prophets enjoyed the same prerogatives as the sages, having the power

---

[43] Cf. Tosafot to BT Yebamot 71b.

[44] E. g. BT Rosh ha-Shanah 19a.

[45] Cf. infra, pp. 215-20.

to enact Takkanot (ordinances) and Seyagim (preventive measures).[46] Hence, many proof-texts cited by the rabbis for certain laws have reference to those laws which the rabbis think must have been enacted by the prophets in their capacity as sages. It needs to be pointed out that although these laws are of the selfsame validity as the rabbinic laws, the rabbis will treat them with greater respect and authority not so much because they emanate from sages who were prophets, but rather because of their antiquity, just as the Talmudic rabbis, the Amoraim, will grant greater authority to the laws of earlier sages such as the Tannaim. It is both a matter of respect for their authors and their sanctification by the passage of time, they having been in force for so many more generations.

In sum, there are three kinds of laws which are based on prophetic proof-texts: (1) rabbinic laws employing prophetic verses as an Asmakhta, (2) oral laws given to Moses which the prophet committed to writing, (3) laws enacted by the prophets in their capacity of sages. We cannot always be certain to which category to relegate each proof-text. Each instance must be examined in its own legal and historical setting before we may be in a position to assign it with any degree of certainty to any one of these three categories.

---

[46] E. g. BT Berakhot 48b; BT Shabbat 14b; 30a; BT Pesahim 92a; 117a; BT Sukkah 44a; PT Erubin 2:1, p. 20a; ibid. 3:9, p. 21c.

Transforming an oral law into a written law. - For the longest time, the oral law (i.e. the laws given orally to Moses, the laws derived by the sages hermeneutically from the Written Law and the laws instituted by the sages themselves) was transmitted only orally and was forbidden to be committed to writing.[47] This prohibition applied to the Aggadic materials as well.[48] The sage was thus deprived of the power of the pen. Only the prophet, in addition to the power of the spoken word, of which he was the unchallenged master, was granted the authority to commit the spoken word to writing.[49]

This exclusive authority of the prophet had a profound and far-reaching effect on the prohibition of recording the oral law. While it is true that the prophet had no direct power of the pen which would permit him to write down any oral law which he might choose, he could do so in certain instances by indirection. Whenever his prophecy had bearing on any oral law, such a law, becoming an integral part of his prophecy, found its way into writing as part of the prophetic record.

Now this power of the prophet is not to be compared to the power which the rabbis have ultimately arrogated unto

---

[47] BT Giṭṭin 60b, and parallels.

[48] PT Megillah 4:1, p. 74d; BT Gittin 60a, and see Rashi, ad loc.; but cf. notations of Z. H. Chajes ad loc.

[49] Cf. Jer. 36:2; BT Baba Batra 14b.

themselves to commit the oral law to writing. What the rabbis have done was admittedly an infraction of the law, but they took the liberty to do so in order to save the oral law from oblivion as it grew too unwieldy for it to be retained by memory and transmitted by word of mouth. True, the rabbis are empowered to break a law for the sake of saving and preserving the law as a whole,[50] nevertheless it is in the end nothing more than an accommodation and an expedient. The prophet, on the other hand, when he weaves an oral law into the fabric of his prophetic record, does so by right and as a matter of required procedure.

Moreover, this dissimilarity goes even deeper than the mere difference between a de jure act and a de facto act, between law and expedient. It goes to the very nature of these two separate written records. The language in which the rabbis have recorded the oral law is formulated by men, great men, to be sure, but nevertheless men with all the shortcomings to which men are subject. But the oral laws recorded by the prophets in the context of their prophecy were formulated by the same divine direction that guided and determined all of their recorded prophecies.

As a result, these laws, which have become an indistinguishable part of the prophetic record, are worthy objects of interpretation by means of all the hermeneutical rules

---

[50] BT Temurah 14b; BT Gittin 60a.

applied to the Pentateuch itself.[51] This, of course, does not apply to the written record of the rabbis. Only the Prophets, being part of a divinely written record, may be subjected to the stringent and exacting minutiae which the hermeneutical rules presuppose. But since the oral laws recorded in the Mishna and Talmud are the work and word of man, written down for the sake of expediency, no application of the hermeneutical rules was made to them. In other words, while the oral laws that found their way into the prophetic record attained the status of written laws, the oral laws that were recorded by the rabbis did not acquire such a status, but remained mere oral laws which were written down as an aid to memory with their written record to be treated merely as some kind of "reference notes."

Selection of location of the Sanctuary. - From the clause "which the Lord your God shall choose" in the verse, "But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek and thither thou shalt come" (Deut. 12:5), the rabbis elicit that the choice of the divinely-desired location is to be announced by means of

---

[51] Cf. Baraita of R. Eliezer b. R. Jose ha-Gelili; Mishnat R. Eliezer, pp. 9-41; cf. PT Megillah 1:1, p. 70a. This power of the prophet to transmute an oral law into a written law is palpably manifested by the following. An oral law while still in its oral stage cannot be subjected to interpretation by the hermeneutical rules (Mishna Nazir 7, end; BT Shabbat 132a, and cf. Rashi, ad loc., BT Zebaḥim 93b; BT Menaḥot 7b; cf. Entziklopedia Talmudit, s. v. Halakha le-Moshe mi-Sinai). Yet, once it finds its way into the written record of the Prophets it becomes a valid subject of interpretation by all the hermeneutical rules by which the Prophets are generally interpreted.

a prophet.[52] However, this power of the prophet is somewhat circumscribed by a subsequent rabbinic comment: "One might think that you should wait until the prophet tells it to you, therefore the Torah teaches us 'unto His habitation shall ye seek,' seek and find, and thereafter the prophet will tell you."[53] Such was indeed, according to the rabbinic tradition, the actual historic occurrence. At first, David entered upon a diligent search to discover the desired location, as it is written: "He swore to the Lord...I will not enter my dwelling house...until I find a place for the Lord " (Ps. 132:2-5). Subsequently, Gad the prophet came and revealed to David the intended place (2 Sam. 24:18).[54] That a prophet must confirm the place for the Sanctuary was also observed in the building of the Second Temple. On the return to Zion from the Babylonian exile, the rabbis report that "three prophets came up with them from the exile, one who testified before them concerning the altar and the location of the altar..."[55]

At this point a logical question is in order. If a place found for the Sanctuary cannot be granted approval with-

---

[52]Sifre, ad loc., p. 128; PT Avodah Zarah 3:7, p. 43a.

[53]Sifre, loc. cit.

[54]Ibid.; cf. Peskita R., 43, p. 179b; cf. BT Zebahim 54b, where the search for the location of the Temple was a joint venture of David and Samuel. It should be noted, however, that Samuel was acting qua sage and not qua prophet since he was employing academic methods and not prophetic ones to discover this location.

[55]BT Zebahim 62a.

out a revelation from a prophet, what is the purpose of the exhortation to go out in search of such a place and not to wait for a prophet to come and tell us. Apparently, this injunction is based on the common rules of courtesy which, needless to point out, also govern the relations between man and God. Viewed from this vantage point, just as it would be deemed a breach of good manners for a guest to direct his host where to place him, so is it improper for God to direct Israel where to dedicate a sanctuary for His Presence. Hence the selection of the Sanctuary must be humanly inspired and initiated. An attempt must be made by Israel as the host to discover a suitable location, and only in the wake of such an effort will God reveal His pleasure as to the choice of the location.

This complementary partnership in the initial choice of a location for the Sanctuary is of continuous duration. When in the future it becomes necessary to extend the boundaries of Jerusalem or the boundaries of the Sanctuary's courtyards, it will be a joint venture of the Lord and the people: "No addition is to be made to the City and to the Courtyards except by the king, prophet, Urim and Tumim and the Sanhedrin..."[56]

Within the scope of this prophetic competence fall not only the locating and the delimiting of the sanctuary precincts,

---

[56]Mishna Shebuoth 2:2, and parallels. As to the requirement of the Urim and Tumim, cf. BT Shebuoth 16a, and PT Sanhedrin 1:5, p. 19b.

but their entire structural design as well. According to the rabbis, as based on the verses in 1 Chr. 28:11,19, all the details and the particular dimensions were formulated by the Holy Spirit and written down on a scroll which Samuel handed to David.[57] The prophets are credited with the minutest details such as making sure that the sun should concentrate its rays on the east gate of the Temple both during winter and summer.[58] Although no changes are permitted to be introduced in the design of the Sanctuary, a prophet is empowered to do so as in the case of the deviations introduced in the Second Temple[59] and the major changes in the Temple yet to be built as prophesied by Ezekiel.[60]

As part of this prophetic competence may also be considered the special prerogative exercised by the prophet over the Bamah. Before the permanent Sanctuary was established in Jerusalem, during the time when the sanctuary was located in various places, the prophet alone was in possession of the power to authorize the offering of sacrifices on a Bamah outside the established sanctuary. In the words of the rabbis: "The Bamah is not permitted except through a prophet, as it is written: 'Take heed not to offer your burnt offerings in any

---

[57] PT Megillah 1:1, p.70a; cf. Agg. Ber., chap. 38; but cf. Mid. Samuel 15:3, where Moses is named as the first recipient of this scroll. Cf. Rashi to BT Sukkah 51b, bottom; but cf. pseudo-Rashi to 1 Chron. 28:19.

[58] PT Erubin 5:1, p. 22c.

[59] Cf. BT Erubin 104a; BT Pesaḥim 86a; BT Sukkah 51b.

[60] Ezek., chaps. 4-43; cf. Mishna Middot 2:5;3:1.

place which you see but in the place which God will choose in one of your tribes' (Deut. 12:13)."[61]

Election of a king. - The Bible is replete with historical data attesting to the role of the prophet in anointing and in deposing kings. Samuel anointed Saul as king (1 Sam. 10:1); subsequently he removed him (1 Sam. 15:28) and replaced him with David (1 Sam. 16:13). Solomon was anointed by Nathan (1 Kings 1:34); Ahiyah named Jeroboam as king over the Ten Tribes (1 Kings 11:31); Elijah was ordered to anoint Yehu (1 Kings 19:16), which was ultimately carried out by his disciple Elisha (2 Kings 9:1-3).[62]

The rabbis derive this power of the prophet from the verse: "Thou shalt set over thee a king whom the Lord your God shall choose" (Deut. 17:15). Quite logically, the expression "whom the Lord your God shall choose" is taken to mean "by means of a prophet,"[63] for such is the way God reveals His choice. That is why, in the rabbinic view, all kings who reigned after the fourth generation of Yehu are considered

---

[61]PT Megillah 1:13, p. 72c; Lev. R. 22:9, p. 518, and ed. note 4; cf. J. Rozin, Zophnat Pa'ane'ah to Mishneh Torah, yesode ha-Torah 9:1.

[62]Cf. A. Jepsen, Nabi (Munchen, 1934), p. 177: "The king may sit with full rights on Israel's throne who, with the sanction of God, was commissioned by the prophet. This theory is known in post-exilic times (Nehem. 6:7). It is evident that he who has won for himself the aid of the prophets could expect to be acknowledged. In somewhat earlier times, the prophecies of Haggai attempted to declare Zerubabel as king" (trans. from the German). Cf. J. Klausner, Ha-Ra'yon ha-Meshihi be-Yisrael, p. 271, who shows that it will be the prophet Elijah who will anoint the Messiah when he comes.

[63]Sifre, ad loc., p. 208. It is worth noting that when

usurpers since they ruled without the authorization of a prophet. In the words of the rabbis: "They took it by robbery!"[64]

At this point it should be noted that in addition to the prophet's appointment, the king must assume effective control over his kingdom. Only after this second condition is fulfilled will he succeed to all his rights as king. For this reason was David lacking his royal prerogatives while Saul was still alive despite the fact that he had already been anointed by Samuel.[65] Similarly, during the six months in which David was in flight because of Absalam's revolt, David lost his royal rights.[66] Thus, the appointment by the prophet is a necessary but not a sufficient requirement for the attainment of royal rights.

War and peace. - Even upon a cursory reading of the Prophets one cannot avoid the inescapable conclusion that the question of war and peace constitutes a paramount preoccupation of the prophetic mission. The prophet intervened without hesitation in the conduct of state affairs, especially with regard to this all-time crucial question.

Moses first chose the chieftains to serve under him (Ex. 18:21), he selected them by the power of prophecy (Mekilta, amalek, 2, p. 198).

[64] PT. Horayot 3:5, p. 47b.

[65] BT Megillah 14b.

[66] PT Rosh ha-Shanah 1:5, p.56b.

This fact is forcefully expressed in the charge given to Jeremiah upon his accession to the call: "Behold I have appointed thee over the nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to break, to destroy and to wreck, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). This intervention of the prophet was not merely accepted begrudgingly as part of the hard facts of the social and political realities of the day, but there were instances when the prophet's view was sought out and welcomed. Suffice it to make reference to Jehoshophat's inquiring of Micaiah (1 Kings 22:15), or from Elisha (2 Kings 3:11), or Isaiah's joining the war party and favoring war against Sennacherib (Isa. 8:12; cf. Isa 22:15; 37:6,7).[67]

However, there were also instances to the contrary such as the accusation of disloyalty and treachery levelled against Jeremiah for daring to advocate peace with Babylonia (Jer. chaps. 37,38). Even though his intervention was not welcomed, note should be taken of the fact that no one questioned his right to intervene. Furthermore, in the end the king at the risk of incurring the displeasure of his officers consulted Jeremiah in private and asked him for his oracle (Jer. 38:14-28).

The rabbis, in dealing with the question of going to war, require the consent of the Sanhedrin and the consultation

---

[67] Cf. BT Sanhedrin 26a.

of the Urim and Tumim.[68] Although they do not expressly require the consultation of a prophet, it does not imply that they would deny the prophet the right to intervene, for the message of the prophet certainly applies to war if it is to have any application at all. The reason they do not make the consultation of a prophet as one of the requirements is that it would be a duplication of the requirement to consult the Urim and Tumim. It can safely be assumed that in the absence of the Urim and Tumim, the prophet would take their place, and would then have to be consulted before the nation might go to war. In fact, there is one rabbinic opinion which asserts that wherever there is a prophecy there is no need for the Urim and Tumim.[69] Thus, the requirement of the Urim and Tumim implies their possible alternative, the prophet![70]

This is apparently implied in the rabbinic remark that Moses was told to set Joshua "before Eleazar the priest"

---

[68]BT Sanhedrin 16a; cf. PT Shabbat 2:3, p.5b. According to the rabbis, David's occupation of Syria was "a private conquest." Because of it, Syria was not accorded the holiness due to a territory which is annexed by the people of Israel as a whole (BT Gittin 47a, and parallels). One of the explanations of the term "a private conquest" is that it lacked consultation of the Urim and Tumim, and it was thus an unauthorized act (Rashi, quoted in Tosafot to BT Avodah Zarah 21a).

[69]PT Sanhedrin 1:5, p. 19b.

[70]Cf. 1 Sam. 28:6,15 and cf. BT Berakhot 12b. Even though Moses was considered a king (Lev. R. 31:4, p. 719, Num. R. 15:11; Targ. J. to deut. 33:5), he was restrained from waging war against Moab without an express or inferred revelation from God (BT Baba Kama 38a). Here we see that there is a definite need for a prophet to authorize a declaration of war.

(Num. 27:19), which the rabbis interpret to mean that the king, before going to war, must consult the high priest by way of the Urim and Tumim. The rabbis hasten, however, to add: "We do not find that Joshua ever made use of him."[71] Evidently Joshua, having been a prophet, took the liberty of substituting his prophetic oracle for the oracle of the Urim and Tumim.[72] That such was the case seems to be obliquely corroborated by the rabbinic observation: "Just as they [i.e. the nations of Canaan] were conquered by a prophet so you [i.e. Israel] will also be conquered by a prophet."[73] It thus emerges that Joshua made war by virtue of a prophetic mandate even as Israel was later vanquished by a similar prophetic pronouncement.

That the question of war is the rightful province of the prophet is clearly indicated by the rabbinic rationalization of the death which Josiah met in his war against the Egyptians. According to this view, it was a punishment "because he should have consulted Jeremiah before going to war, but he did not."[74] Thus we see that not only is the matter of war within the purview of the prophetic authority, but that it is also incumbent upon the king to seek out the prophetic oracle before deciding for war or against it.

---

[71]BT Erubin 63a.

[72]See Tosafot to Sanhedrin 16a, top, and Targ. J. to Num. 27:19.

[73]Leḳaḥ Ṭov to Deut. 8:20; cf. Lam. R. 2:1.

[74]BT Ta'anit 22b.

Prophetic knowledge as valid evidence in law. - Although the rabbis firmly oppose the use of prophecy in deciding a point of law, they fully accept prophecy, or for that matter any other heavenly ordained devide, as valid evidence in a legal case where there is a lack of knowledge of the facts.[75] Prophetic testimony is considered admissible evidence in civil as well as in ritual cases.

Hence we find the rabbis making frequent reference to the prophet Elijah as one who by virtue of his prophetic knowledge is able to appear and resolve any legal case which is undecided because of lack of evidence. Here are several such instances. Sacred food left unattended becomes unfit because a doubt is created whether in the interim it became defiled or not. However, were Elijah to appear and inform us that no defilement occurred, it would be declared ritually clean.[76] Elijah's testimony would be accepted to identify which baby might be the son of a Kohen (priest) and which the son of a slave in a case where the identities of the two had become intermixed,[77] or to identify which of two sisters might be the married one.[78] Two persons deposited money, one depositing a smaller amount and the other a larger amount. Later when they came to claim

---

[75]Cf. Targ. J. to Ex. 28:15; and to Num. 27:21; but cf. Mekilta, nezikin, 15, p. 300. However, this last source does not bar evidence by the Urim and Tumim when it is there, it only precludes the seeking of evidence from the Urim and Tumim for civil lawsuits.

[76]BT Pesahim 34a.

[77]BT Gittin 42b.

[78]BT Yebamot 41b.

their money, each one claims the larger amount. In the absence of evidence, Elijah is qualified to reveal who may be the rightful owner of the larger amount.[79]

Elijah's prophetic prowess is not at all the reason why the rabbis make particular mention of his name rather than the name of any other prophet. This power is equally shared by all other prophets who would come to offer evidence derived from their prophetic knowledge. This fact is dramatically illustrated by the case of manna:

> Even as the prophet would tell Israel what is to be found in clefts or holes, so would the manna reveal to Israel what is to be found in clefts or holes. How is that? Two men came before Moses with a law-suit, one saying: You have stolen my slave, the other saying: You have sold him to me. Moses would say to them: Tomorrow judgment will be pronounced. Tomorrow, then: If his slave's Omer is found in the house of his first master, it was evidence that the other one had stolen him; if it is found in the house of the second master, that was proof that the former had sold him to the latter. 80

Thus we see that any mantic or revelatory means may be used as legal evidence.

According to law, the Temple cannot be constructed on a site on which an idolatrous altar stood at one time. This prompted the rabbis to inquire as to the certainty that the mount of the Temple was never an idolatrous site. To which they reply that it was on the strength of the testimony given

---

[79] Mishna Bab Metzia 3:4.

[80] BT Yoma 75a.

by a prophet.[81] Here again prophecy is accepted in lieu of legal evidence.

The reason why the rabbis often invoke the name of Elijah in instances of factual doubts instead of making use of the generic term "a prophet" is simply the result of a historical event. Since in Talmudic times prophecy long ceased to exist, the rabbis could not reckon on the coming of just any prophet. Only the possible coming of Elijah, who is to be the harbinger of the Messiah, was always considered a distinct reality. That Elijah's coming is treated as a likely reality is clearly demonstrated by the following case: Sacred leavened bread having contracted a doubtful defilement cannot be burned until the last possible moment before Passover, when eating leavened bread is still permitted. The reason for this law is that Elijah may appear and disclose that it really was not defiled and one would thus have sinned by destroying sacred food which was clean. However, if the eve of Passover occurs on Shabbat, a day which precludes the coming of Elijah, one is permitted to dispose of such food on the Friday.[82] This law attests to the seriousness with which the rabbis considered the advent of Elijah. Consequently, it is no wonder that the rabbis, when dealing with doubtful cases lacking evidence, make frequent reference to Elijah and consider his possible coming

---

[81] PT Avodah Zarah 3:7, p. 43a, and cf. commentaries, ad loc.

[82] BT Pesahim 13a; cf. ibid. 15a.

as a factor to be seriously reckoned with.[83]

At this point we must turn our attention to investigating whether a prophetic revelation is admissible evidence in cases of capital offense. The rabbis relate that "Solomon sought to judge cases at law that are in the mind [i.e. of which no one knows the truth except the accused] without witnesses and without prior warning. Whereupon a Bat Kol came forth and said... 'On evidence of two witnesses... shall he that is to die be put to death' (Deut. 17:6)."[84] This passage would strongly indicate that prophetic knowledge is insufficient evidence for condemnation in capital offenses. However, this passage lacks clarity, as it is not altogether clear whether it was really prophetic knowledge which Solomon was attempting to employ, or was the quality of "wisdom," which he attempted to use as an instrument for ascertaining the truth.[85]

---

[83] M. Friedmann in his introduction to his edition of Seder Elijah R., p. 23, n.1 holds that prophecy is inadmissible evidence in civil suits. As a result, he is compelled to interpret the ruling "Let it [i.e. the money] remain until Elijah shall come" as a mere figure of speech for the concept of its remaining indefinitely undecided unless new evidence or an admission is forthcoming. However, he has no proof for this view, and it is contradicted by the example of the manna's serving as valid evidence in a civil suit. Cf. Entziklopedia Talmudit, s. v. Eliahu.

[84] BT Rosh ha-Shanah 21b.

[85] See Targ. to Kohel. 12:10, where it is assumed that it was by the quality of wisdom. Cf. Targum Sheni to Esther, chap.2, where Solomon's throne is described as having been so constructed as to cause severe fright in a witness who might not tell the truth.

The case of the Messiah who, according to the rabbis as based on Isaiah 11:3, will judge by virtue of a prophetically endowed sense,[86] cannot be brought to bear on this issue for many reasons. First of all, it is not certain whether it refers to individual judicial cases or whether it refers to judging in a broad sense, such as judging society and its problems.[87] Secondly, the position and status of the Messiah is of a nature sui generis to which we have no right to compare prophecy. Thirdly, the authority of the Messiah is a fusion of royal and prophetic powers which invests him with supra-ordinary judicial powers, possessed neither by the prophet alone, nor by the king alone, nor by a juxtaposition of these two powers. This judicial power can only be possessed by one whose person represents a true merger of these two qualities of royalty and prophecy acting as one entity such as the Messiah, the prophet-king.[88] Perhaps this was what was behind Solomon's desire to act in this capacity, but which was not granted to him.

To return to our original question, there is an interesting rabbinic comment which puts evidence by prophecy in

---

[86] BT Sanhedrin 93b.

[87] The verb "to judge" is synonymous in the Bible, especially in Isaiah and the Psalms, with delivering an individual or a nation from danger or oppression. This can be easily seen from the appellation "judges" given to the saviors of Israel in the period which goes by this name. Cf. Gen. 49:16, and Targum O., ad loc.; cf. J. Klausner, op. cit., p. 14.

[88] J. Klausner, op. cit., p. 16.

capital offenses in the category of conjecture, which is not admissible. Commenting on the verse, "As soon as Moses came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, he became enraged..." (Lev. 32:19), the rabbis observe "From here we derive that no man should judge by conjecture."[89] What is called here conjecture is no less than God's prophetic words previously given to Moses saying quite clearly: "Go down, for thy people have dealt corruptly...they have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshipped it" (Lev. 32:7,8). Thus we see that, in the rabbinic view, any evidence by prophecy even of the highest order such as the prophetic knowledge of a Moses is insufficient to condemn in cases of capital offense.[90]

The prophet as sage. - The image of the prophet, as the rabbis construe it, is not one of an individual who is constantly immersed in communicating with God and who is always engaged in proclaiming the divine message. Besides these activities, the prophet acted in many an instance in the capacity of a sage, teaching and disseminating the knowledge of the Law. Because of this activity of the prophets do they constitute an impor-

---

[89] PT Ta'anit 4:8, p. 68c; cf. Ex. R. 51:5; Deut. R. 3:12. It seems that the decision to break the Tablets was of such magnitude that it was equivalent to a decision of capital punishment. For the status of conjecture as evidence, see BT Sanhedrin 37b, and parallels.

[90] Cf. BT Sanhedrin 43b; cf. Maimonides, Perush ha-Mishna, Sanhedrin 6:2.

tant link in the chain of Halakhic tradition, in the authoratative transmission of the law: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets delivered it to the Men of the Great Assembly."[91]

The rabbis make reference to an array of oral laws handed down by Moses from Sinai as having been transmitted by the prophets to the sages.[92] The rabbis sometimes treat the prophet as a sage deciding the law, to the extent that they point to an overturned mortar upon which the prophet Haggai sat in the manner of a sage and delivered three rulings regarding certain laws.[93] We find Shamai reporting in the name of the prophet Haggai a ruling regarding responsibility for killing by means of an agent.[94] The rabbis make reference to the court of Samuel.[95] In fact, Samuel used to make the rounds as an itinerant judge to settle legal disputes.[96] Isaiah is reported to have held an academy at the door of Hezekiah's palace when the latter was stricken with illness

---

[91]Mishna Aboth 1:1. The conspicuous failure to list the priests as a link in the chain of tradition emphatically indicates that the rabbis are not of the opinion held by many (cf. S. W. Baron, op. cit. V.I., p. 158) that during the First Temple the priests were the standard bearers of the Law and were largely responsible for its dissemination.

[92]Mishna Pe'ah 2:6; BT Nazir 53a; BT Bekhorot 58a; BT Yoma 71b, and parallels.

[93]BT Yebamot 16a; PT Yebamot 1:6, p. 3a. As to this mortar being real and not figurative, cf. Tosef. Kelim, baba batra, 2:3. Cf. J. Brull, Ben Zekunim, pp. 59-60.

[94]BT Kiddushin 43a. [95]BT Yebamot 77a.

[96]BT Shabbat 56a; Ex. R. 16:4; cf. Kallah R., chap. 6.

because the study of the Torah banishes disease.[97]

The calendar, which up to the middle of the fourth century was fixed on a month-by-month and year-by-year basis by the sages, was entrusted, during the prophetic period, to many of the prophets acting as the chief sages of their respective generations. The prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Baruch b. Neriyah are reputed to have intercalated the year.[98] Thus, during Elisha's time when according to Halakhic practice a certain year should have been made into a leap year, the rabbis query as to why Elisha failed to intercalate it, assuming quite naturally that it was within his province to do so.[99] The institution of a double New Year's Day was established by the early prophets.[100]

Many of the most common Halakhic practices are alleged by the rabbis to have been instituted by the prophets acting as the sages of their generations: the public reading of the Torah on Shabbat, Monday and Thursday;[101] the reciting of the

---

[97]BT Erubin 26a. Cf. Lev. R. 10:2, p. 197, where Isaiah tells of his peripatetic learning in the academy. Cf. PT Yebamot 8:3, p. 9c, where Isaiah expounds a prophecy of his in the manner of a sage. But cf. Mid. Ps. 9:11. Concerning Ezekiel, see PRE, chap. 8.

[98]PT Sanhedrin 1:2, p. 19a.

[99]Ibid. p. 18d; Tosef., Sanhedrin 2:5; cf. BT Ketubot 105a; Seder Eliahu Z., chap. 2, p. 173. During Isaiah's time the one responsible for the intercalation of the calendar was Hezekiah (BT Sanhedrin 12b), not because Isaiah was not considered a sage, but apparently because the rabbis considered Hezekiah to have been the chief sage in his generation (cf. Mid. Ps. 22:2; BT Sanhedrin 94b).

[100]PT Erubin 3:9, p. 21c.

[101]Mekilta, va-yassa, 1, p. 154; BT Baba Ḳama 82a.

Hallel;[102] the Amidah prayer was the joint work of prophets and sages.[103] Solomon is credited with instituting Erubin and the washing of hands,[104] and he is responsible for the prohibition of second-degree incestual relations.[105] The practices of taking the willow branches and the libation of water on the holiday of Sukkot were enacted by the prophets.[106] Haggai instituted the law of "defilement of liquids."[107] Daniel and his fellows forbade non-Jewish oil, a decree which was subsequently annulled by the rabbis on the ground that it never gained the acceptance of the people, a provision necessary for the validation of any rabbinic decree.[108]

That the rabbis regarded the prophets also as sages can be seen from their interpretation of the verse in Ezekiel 13:9 concerning the false prophets: "'They shall not be in the council of my people,' this refers to the council of intercalation, and 'they shall not be recorded in the register of the house of Israel,' this refers to the writ of ordination."[109]

---

[102] BT Pesaḥim 117a.

[103] BT Megillah 17b; PT Berakhot 2:4, p. 4d.

[104] BT Shabbat 14b.

[105] BT Yebamot 21a.

[106] PT Sheviit 1:5, p. 33b; cf. BT Sukkah 44a.

[107] BT Pesaḥim 16b.

[108] PT Avodah Zarah 2:9, p. 41d; BT Avodah Zarah 36a.

[109] BT Ketubot 112a; PT Sanhedrin 1:2, p. 18c.

By inference we may thus safely conclude that the true prophets do possess the authority of rabbinic ordination and do participate in the important function of intercalating the calendar which is reckoned as one of the highest attainments to which an ordained sage can aspire.[110]

From this vantage point we may throw light on a rather baffling practice of the Targum J. to the Prophets. Very frequently the Targum renders the Hebrew "Nabi" and "Nebiim" by the Aramaic "Safra" and "Safraya" respectively, terms which generally denote teachers or sages.[111] Now that we have seen that from the rabbinic perspective many a prophet acted as a sage, it should not be altogether strange to refer to the prophet by the more general appellation of teacher and sage which he was at the same time.[112]

The rabbis felt justified and encouraged in viewing the prophets also as sages, for to them the prophets were the spiritual descendants of Moses, who was at the same time the father of all prophets and the father of all sages.[113] In

---

[110] In accordance with a rabbinic assertion that failure to participate in intercalation is tantamount to committing idolatry (PT Ḥagigah 3:1, p. 78d), it becomes clear why the rabbis had the prophets, who were the staunch fighters against idolatry, occupy themselves with the business of intercalation.

[111] Cf. D. Hoffmann's comment. to Deut. 17:8-11; cf. E. Bass, op. cit., p. 22

[112] Cf. BT Yoma 69b wherein Jeremiah and Daniel are referred to as rabbis.

[113] BT Megillah 13a.

consequence, the prophets who were the successors of Moses were not to be restricted to the wearing of the mantle of prophecy on their shoulders, but they were also entitled to carry the crown of the Law on their heads.[114] Each of these spheres of activity, however, was kept separate and distinct, without one's encroaching on the rightful territory of the other.[115]

The relative rank of the prophet. - The overriding non-professional character of the prophets[116] does not imply that they did not hold a position of privilege and power in the hierarchy of organized life. They did not necessarily receive remuneration for their work,[117] and they may not have had clearly de-

---

[114] This explains the difficult passage in Josephus (Antiquities, 4, 8, 14) where it is stated that all undecided cases "are brought to the Holy City before the High Priest, the prophet and the elders." This reference to the prophet is neither anachronistic nor is the prophet as such qualified for this task. It is the result of the fact that the prophet acted in the capacity of sage while still retaining the appellation of prophet. Thus, the prophet in this context merely refers to the chief sage who in times past rather frequently happened to be a prophet as well. For the various interpretations of this passage, see H. Mantel, Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin (Cambridge, 1961), p. 69, n. 83.

[115] Cf. Z. H. Chajes, Torat Neviim, p. 1b, 2a. Cf. R. Abraham Maimuni, Megillat Setarim, chap. 7.

[116] The fact that, according to one rabbinic tradition, the prophets were in the habit of wearing distinctive clothes (Ruth Z. 1:8; Yalk. Shim., II, 601), does not attest to any professional pretense. Those were probably garments which were expressive of their way of life, and not of their office of authority. Referring to the prophet's wife as a prophetess (Isa. 8:3) does not indicate a professional status for the prophet; it may be nothing more than an expression of respect akin to the rabbinic dictum: "The wife of a scholar is like a scholar" (BT Avodah Zarah 39a). Cf. AJepsen, Nabi, pp.166,168; H.H.Rowley, The Servant of the Lord, p.107; Ch. W. Reines, Priests and Prophets (Heb.), p.20.

[117] In the words of the rabbis: "It is not customary for God's prophets to receive payment for their prophetism" (Num. R. 10:18; cf. BT Berakhot 10b). Regarding Samuel, Cf. Targ. J. to 1Sam. 9:7.

lineated and permanently fixed functions to perform, yet they occupied a definite position in the structure of organized society.

What needs investigation and clarification is the question of the relative rank of the prophet vis-à-vis the other officials and functionaries in his contemporary society. The Halakha, dealing with this problem strictly from the ideal legalistic outlook, rather than from the historical perspective, has established an order of priorities: "A sage takes precedence over a king of Israel, a king of Israel takes precedence over the High Priest, the High Priest takes precedence over a prophet, a prophet takes precedence over a priest anointed for war..."[118] Whether or not this ideal scale of preferences was always strictly adhered to may be seen from a quaint story related to the rabbis:

> ...Hezekiah said: 'Let Isaiah come to me, for thus we find in the case of Elijah who went to Aḥab'; Isaiah said: 'Let Hezekiah come to me, for thus we find in the case of Yehoram son of Aḥab who went to Elisha.' What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He brought sickness upon Hezekiah, and He ordered Isaiah to go visit the sick. [119]

This wrangling between king and prophet for the prestige of

---

[118]PT Horayot 3:8, p. 48b; Tosef., Horayot 2:8; BT Horayot 13a. The rabbis obtain this order of priorities by inference from various Biblical proof-texts. However, it is strikingly borne out by the very sequence in which these various authorities appear in the Book of Deuteronomy. At first comes the sage (Deut. 17;8-13), followed by the king (17:14-20), and then follows the priesthood (18:1-8), and in the end come divination and prophetism (18:9-14, 14-22).

[119]BT Berakhot 10a.

one's particular office, with each one appealing to precedent to support his view, tends to show that it was not as yet an established principle in practice as to who should defer to whom. In the end, God arranged it so that it was Isaiah who had to come to Hezekiah, thus indicating to Isaiah that the prophet should defer to the king. In this way the Halakha is vindicated and triumphs in the end!

A similar instance is related by the rabbis concerning Phineas, who is counted amongst the prophets.[120] Jephtah vowed that anyone who might first come out of the doors of his house should become a wholeburnt offering. When it came to be his own daughter, he nevertheless carried out his vow (Jud. chap. 11). The rabbis commenting on this story, query:

> "Was not Phineas there to absolve him of his vow? But Phineas said: He needs me, and I am to go to him! ...while Jephtah said: Am I, the chief of Israel's leaders, to go to Phineas! Between the two of them the maiden perished.... Both were punished for her blood. Jephtah died through his limbs dropping off...Phineas was deprived of the Holy Spirit..." 121

In this instance, the jealous quarreling for each one's prestige was so keen that it led to the loss of an innocent life. Consequently, it could not possibly have been a matter of safeguarding one's personal honor, but it was a fight for the establishment of a principle with regard to the superiority of an office.

---

[120]Seder Olam R., chap. 20.

[121]Gen. R. 60:3, p. 643; Lev. R. 37:4, p. 866.

The fact that both were punished in the end merely teaches us that the preservation of human life takes precedence over even the establishment of a precedent. However, from the type of punishment meted out to each, we may conjecture who would have been considered in the wrong were a loss of life not at stake.

The fact that Jephtah's punishment did not touch on his position as chieftain indicates that he was right in his demand that Phineas come to him. All he was guilty of was the murder of a human being who could have been saved. Consequently, his punishment was death, by way of measure for measure. Phinease, on the other hand, was guilty of a misdemeanor in the use of his office since, by right, he had to show courtesy to the ruler and come to him. Hence his punishment had to touch on his office as prophet to impress upon him the error of his view. That is why his punishment was his removal from prophecy.

Next in line to the king comes the High Priest, who takes precedence over the prophet. Both in the Bible and in the rabbinic writings, the priest is mentioned before the prophet whenever these two are listed together[122] which points

---

[122] E. g. 2 Kings 23:2; Jer. 18:18;29:1; Zech. 7:3; Lam. 2:20; Nehem. 9:32; BT Ḥullin 56b; Lam R. 2:3. Cf. M. Z. Segal, Mevo ha-Mikra, V. II, p. 246; Ch. W. Reines, op. cit., p. 21. Both these authors explain the precedence of priests over prophets by the latter's dependence on the former for permission to use the Sanctuary grounds as a place for prophesying. However, such an explanation will fit only the cultic view of prophecy, a view which is subject to wide disagreement and is open to question.

to the fact that the priestly office takes precedence over the prophetic office.

What needs to be considered is the reason or reasons for this inferior position of the prophet, which is below that of the king and the High Priest. Both the king and the High Priest uninterruptedly bear the mark of their respective office regardless of whether they are actively engaged in the performance of any of its duties. That is why their person is at all times an official person inasmuch as their office is an inseparable part of them, since they are able at will to assume the duties of their office. The prophet, on the other hand, bears the marks of his office only when he is actively involved, either receiving or delivering a divine message.[123] Every performance of his may be the last, as the office of prophecy may be taken away from him at any time and without prior notice. In fact, according to the rabbis, every prophet is endowed with but a limited number of prophecies. Interpreting the verse "He maketh a weight for the Ruah" (Job 28:25), the rabbis observe: "Even the Holy Spirit which rests on the prophets, rests only by weight. There is one who prophesies one book and there is one who prophesies two books."[124]

---

[123]Cf. J. Agus, "The Prophets in Modern Hebrew Literature," HUCA, XXVIII (1953), 295.

[124]Lev. R. 15:2, p. 321, and parallels.

Thus, prophetism is not an integral part of the prophetic person. When he is not actively engaged, he is an ordinary person awaiting a call, with only the residual after-effects of his previous calls. As such he still commands special respect, but he has no priority over the king and High Priest who are never without their office.

Thus far we have dealt with the question of priorities, which refers to the rights and privileges to which these persons are entitled. In this regard we merely take into account the various qualities of each, thus arriving at each one's relative worth, from which reckonings the proper sequence of priorities is established.

However, this conclusion does not at all affect any particular right which one of them may enjoy while the other is completely deprived thereof, since its peculiar nature falls within the province of the office and not within that of the second. Within this category come some of the powers of the prophet which were dealt with in the opening of this chapter, such as the suspension of a law, the selection of the location for the Sanctuary and the writing down of an oral law. These and certain others properly belong to the prophet as they require divine sanction and are, therefore, beyond the power of King and High Priest.

Similarly, there may be a certain privilege which be-

fits the nature of one and not that of the other. For example: Burial is forbidden within a walled city in the Land of Israel; and if there is someone buried there, his remains must be exhumed and removed with the exception of the grave of a king and the grave of a prophet.[125] Thus, a prophet is accorded a prerogative conspicuously withheld from the High Priest.

The reason for this exception with regard to the prophet probably has to do with the particular power of the prophet in the realm of prayer,[126] as can be seen from the prayers of certain fast days wherein many references are made to the efficacy of the prayers of many of the prophets.[127] Since burial places have been recognized by the rabbis as especially efficacious locations for prayer,[128] it is not at all unreasonable to assume that because of the greatness of the prophet in prayer, his burial place is of even greater value in contributing to the effectiveness of a prayer, and therefore his grave should not be removed no matter where it may be located.

---

[125] Tosef., Baba Batra 1:11; PT Nazir 9:3, p.57d; Mid. Tannaim, Hoffmann, p.115. Regarding burial in Jerusalem, the only exception is made for members of the Davidic dynasty and, strangely enough, for Ḥuldah, the prophetess. See ibid. and Tosef., Negaim 6:2; ADRN, chap. 35; but cf. ADRN, II, chap. 39, p.107, where it is reported that Isaiah's grave is located in Jerusalem. Cf. Tosafot to BT Baba Batra 58a and Ḥidushei ha-RITBA (R. Yom Tov of Seville), ad loc. concerning the dead body of a non-Jewish prophet that it is subject to all the laws of defilement the same as that of a Jew.

[126] Jer.27:18, and cf. Tan., Buber, va-yetze, 4, p.147. Cf. M.Z.Segal "Le-toledot ha-Neviim be-Yisrael" in J.H.Hertz Jubilee Vol. (London, 1943), p.104.

[127] Mishan Ta'anit 2:4; cf. Mishnat R.Eliezer, p.288

[128] BT Ta'anit 16a;23b; BT Soṭa 34b; cf. BT Baba Metzia 85b; Gen. R. 82:10.

On the other hand, there are rights granted to the king and High Priest which the prophet lacks. Both the king and High Priest are exempt, under certain circumstances, from having to appear before a court to offer testimony,[129] a privilege not given to the prophet. Only the Sanhedrin is competent to judge a High Priest for a capital offense,[130] whereas any court of twenty-three is competent to judge a prophet for a capital offense, with the exception of only the crime of a false prophecy, which requires adjudication by the Sanhedrin,[131]

---

[129] BT Sanhedrin 18b.

[130] Mishna Sanhedrin 1:5; BT Sanhedrin 18b. As for hailing a king before a court of justice, the Mishna (Sanhedrin 2:2) unequivocally states: "The king can neither judge nor be judged." However, there seems to be a definite difference in the interpretation of this Mishna between the Babylonian school and the Palestinian school. According to Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 19a), this Mishna does not refer to the kings of the Davidic dynasty who are subject to the jurisdiction of the court. It applies only to the Israelite kings whom the sages have removed from the jurisdiction of the courts because of their unwillingness to submit, and at that, the ordinance came into being during Maccabean times. But according to the Palestinian tradition (PT Sanhedrin 2:3, p. 20a; Num. R. 5:7), this ruling is not of rabbinic origin and applies equally to all kings, as it is based on the verse in Ps. 17:2, wherein David says: "From before Thee will my sentence come forth," thus making the king subject exclusively to the jurisdiction of the heavenly court (Cf. Mid. Ps. and Yalk. Shim., ad loc.). Such being the case, the king is endowed with a right given neither to the High Priest nor to the Prophet.

[131] Mishna Sanhedrin 1:15.

since the validation of the true prophet is given to the jurisdiction of this court in the first place.[132]

This right of the High Priest is derived from the verse, "Every great matter they shall bring before thee [i.e. Moses]" (Ex. 18:22), which the rabbis read to mean that "every matter of the 'great,'" that is, of a High Priest or of the head of a tribe, shall be judged by Moses or his equivalent, which is the Sanhedrin.[133]

The fact that the prophet is not included as one of "the great" together with the High Priest and the head of a tribe tends to indicate that the rabbis did not consider his position as one of dominion and lordship. This finds corroboration in an incisive rabbinic remark: "Woe to lordship which buries its possessor, for there is not a single prophet who did not outlive four kings."[134] Here we see by contrast that prophetism does not carry with it aspects of lordship and holding sway over people similar to those of a ruler.

This is also corroborated by a famous rabbinic observation: "There are three crowns, the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship."[135] The crown of

---

[132] Supra, p. 95 ; In this connection it is worth noting that the false prophet is practically identified with the sage who rebells against the authority of the Sanhedrin (PT Sanhedrin 1:5, p. 19b; cf. BT Sanhedrin 16a).

[133] BT Sanhedrin 16a, cf. 18b.

[134] BT Pesaḥim 87b, and parallels.

[135] Mishna Aboth 4:17; ADRN, chap. 41; BT Yoma 72b; Kohel. R. 7:2.

prophetism is conspicuously missing, which is a clear indication that prophetism is not to be characterized by the possession of a crown inasmuch as its power inheres in its message and not so much in the person of the prophet. In this respect even the crown of Torah is different, for the Torah one learns becomes essentially a part of him; as a rabbinic tradition puts it: "It is his Torah!"[136] Furthermore, learning Torah brings with it ordination and the sway of the judiciary and a position of leadership such which the rabbis compare to that of a king.[137] In fact, the rabbis give to the sages the title of kings.[138] All of this is not shared by the prophet despite his superior eminence and the overwhelming authority of the divine message, of which he is the mouthpiece.

---

[136] BT Ḳiddushin 32b; BT Avodah Zarah 19a.

[137] BT Horayot 10a, b.

[138] BT Giṭṭin 62a; BT Menaḥot 100a.

CHAPTER VIII

CESSATION AND REEMERGENCE OF PROPHECY

When did prophecy cease? - There is a concurrence of opinion, from the rabbis down to our times, that genuine classical prophecy ceased to exist sometime during the beginning years of the Second Temple.[1] At exactly what point this phenomenon occurred is a matter of minor discrepancies in the rabbinic sources, some of which the rabbis themselves resolve, while the others will easily resolve themselves.

A Tannaitic tradition declares: "Ever since the latter prophets, Haggai Zechariah and Malachi, died, the Holy Spirit ceased from Israel."[2] But this tradition clashes with another rabbinic tradition, reported in various forms, which reckons the departure of prophecy from a somewhat earlier date, from the destruction of the First Temple.[3] This last view is in one instance dramatically phrased: "From the day the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken away from the prophets and given

---

[1] According to Esdras 4, 10:42;12:18-47, Ezra was the last prophet. In the Syriac Baruch 77:15;85:1-3 it speaks as if there are no more prophets in existence. The very fact that the Pseudepigraphic authors were prompted to issue their works under assumed names strongly indicates that prophecy was no longer a reality in their day. Josephus, too, states that prophecy ceased after the Persian period. See Against Apion, 1,8.

[2] Tosef., Soṭa 13:4; BT Soṭa 48b, and parallels.

[3] Tan., Buber, bereshit 23, p. 17; Tan., beha'alotkha 6, ed. Buber p. 50; Kohel. R. 12:8; Kohel. Zuṭa, end; cf. Petiḥta, Lam. R. 23; Mid. Ps. 3:7; cf. Mid. R. and Targ. to Lam. 2:9.

to the sages," or as reported by R. Yoḥanan: "...and given to the fools and youth."[4] This obvious contradiction is resolved by the rabbis in two ways. Proceeding from the premise that Jeremiah was the last prophet, they raise the self-evident question: "Have not Ḥaggai, Zechariah and Malachi prophesied after him?" R. Eleazar offers the cryptic answer that their prophecy was "Ḳitzrei Nevuah." This can be rendered to mean that their prophecy was fragmentary, which does not make much sense, or perhaps that theirs was "a low grade prophecy," a meaning which the root ḲẒR possesses.[5] R. Samuel b. Naḥmani resolves this difficulty simply by asserting that their prophecy had

---

[4] BT Baba Batra 12a,b. Cf. E. Urbach in Tarbiz XVII(1945), 3, n.17, who asserts that it refers to the destruction of the First Temple and not, as suggested by Marmorstein, to that of the Second.

[5] Cf. Cant. R. 1:19 and Jastrow's dictionary p. 1409 s.v. ḳatzra. Perhaps, on the basis of the Aramaic word for a sick person, which is ketzira, we may render this phrase as "their prophecy was moribund," i.e., that it was of a weakened form and in a dying state. There is another reading found in Mid. Aggadah to Num. 30:11, ed. Buber p. 161, which reads: "ḳetzat nevuah." This reading, too, is unclear as to its meaning. Literally translated, it means that it was a little bit of prophecy, but then it would be devoid of sense. However, we could be justified in translating it as "a partial prophecy," i.e., that it was an incomplete form of prophecy. In any case, the general meaning is rather clear that these prophecies were of a different and lesser order. Probably for this reason were these prophets treated as a separate and distinct entity in the Chain of Tradition as reported in ADRN, chap. 1: "...The prophets received from the Judges,... Ḥaggai, Zechariah and Malachi received from the prophets, the men of the Great Assembly received from Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi." L. Finkelstein in his "Mabo le-Massektot Aboth ve-ADRN, p. 234, n.17, knew this fact but was unaware of the rabbinic passage which characterizes their prophecy as "ḳitzrei nevuah," and was therefore unable to define their true status.

Cf. S. Mowinckel in JBL, LIII (1934), 226, who for a different reason, being faced with the problem of the prophecies of Ḥaggai, Zechariah and Malachi, resolves his difficulty by declaring them: "'epigoni,' with their ideological 'throwbacks' to the older nebi'ism of the national religious type." Cf. A. Heschel, Torah Min ha-Shamayim, p. 249.

been entrusted to them during Jeremiah's lifetime for later delivery.[6]

In any case, whichever solution is to be accepted, the rabbis could henceforth state on this basis that of the five elements missing from the Second Temple, one was the Holy Spirit of prophecy.[7]

What needs to be brought into proper focus at this point is the widely-quoted Tannaitic source which states that "until this time [i.e. the reign of Alexander the Great] the prophets prophesied by the Holy Spirit; from hereon, incline your ears, and hearken to the words of the sages."[8] It thus follows that, according to this tradition, prophecy continued for about one hundred and fifty years after the death of Malachi, since we know from the study of history that the Persian period in Palestine lasted approximately two hundred years. But, as writers on this subject rightly noted,[9] in the rabbinic chronology the Persian period was, somehow, erroneously contracted to the thirty-four years after the rebuilding of the

---

[6]PSRK, 16, p. 116a, ed. Mandelbaum p. 238. Cf. Yehudah ha-Levi, Kuzari, 3,65; J. Albo, Ikkarim, 3,11.

[7]BT Yoma 21b and cf. Dikdukei Soferim, ad loc.; PT Ta'anit 2:1, p. 65a, and parallels; Num. R. 15:7; Cant. R. 8:11; Tan., Buber, beha'alotkha, 10, p. 50.

[8]Seder Olam R., chap. 30; cf. Tan., shemini, 8, where the prophecy of Amos 8:11,12 that the day will come when the word of God will not be found is made to refer to the Greek period. Cf. Tan., Buber, shemini, 14, p. 32.

[9]E. Urbach in Tarbiz, XVII (1945), 2; J. Z. Lauterbach, Rabbinic Essays, pp. 252-54; S. W. Baron, op. cit., V. I, p. 199.

Second Temple.[10] As a result, they were able to declare that prophecy departed with the death of Malachi which, in their reckoning, occurred at the advent of the Greek period in Palestine. Consequently, a different rabbinic tradition has no difficulty in combining both dates so as to make them one and the same: "The Greeks ruled in the fifty-second year of the Persian reign, and then died Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. At that time prophecy ceased from Israel."[11]

Why did prophecy cease? - Many and varied are the reasons put forth to rationalize the evanescence of prophecy after the death of Malachi. Not all of them are independent and distinct; some overlap, and there are interlinking relationships. However, for the sake of clarity we shall present them as separate reasons.

One of the reasons which gained wide currency is that prophecy disappeared because of the dominance of the Law. At this time the Law became the supreme authority in Jewish life so that prophecy had to give way as something unnecessary and superfluous.[12]

---

[10] Seder Olam R., chap. 30; BT Avodah Zarah 9a. Cf. Lev. R., 29:2, p. 670, and parallels. Cf. J. Z. Lauterbach, "Misunderstood Chronological Statements in the Talmudic Literature," Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research, 1934, pp. 77-84, and cf. S. Schwab, "Comparative Jewish Chronology," J. Breuer Jubilee Volume (New York, 1962), 177-97.

[11] Seder Olam Z., chap. 7. Cf. A. Zacuto, Sefer Yohasin, ed. Filipowski pp. 12a, 13b.

[12] Cf. K. Budde, Geshichte der althebräischen Litteratur (Leipzig, 1906), pp. 4, 135,136; B. Duhm, Israels Propheten (Tubingen, 1916), p. 210; R. Kittel, Geschichte des Volkes Israel.

F. Brown[13] writing on this subject ascribes the decline of prophecy "to the increasing domination of the religious life by ritual" which left "no place for prophecy" since "early prophets had been the foes of the ritual." In order to explain why ritual has attained ascendancy rather than prophecy, he proffers the idea that "ritual was much better qualified to govern the community as a provincial fragment of the Persian empire than prophecy could."[14]

This last view is highly questionable, for it implies that the prophets were super nationalists and revolutionaries, something which is belied by a Jeremiah who exhorted the people to submit and accept foreign domination.[15] Not that the prophets were not patriotic enough, but rather because they were so, they were prompted and motivated to follow a course which would not endanger the life of the nation. Besides, this view that the prophets were antagonistic to ritual has been severely criticized, and rightly so. It has been shown that the prophets were merely against empty ritual, against ritual if it was not associated with social justice and moral behavior.[16]

(Stuttgart-Gotha, 1923-25), V.II, p. 695; A. Peake "The Roots of Hebrew Prophecy etc." in John Rylands Library, VII (1923), 252; R.H.Charles, Religious Development between Old and New Testaments (New York, 1914), pp. 38-41.

For a criticism of this view, see I. Efros, "Prophecy, Wisdom and Apocalypse" in M. Kaplan Jubilee Vol.(New York,1953),p.215

[13]"The Decline of Prophecy" in Essays in Modern Theology and Related Subjects (New York, 1911), pp.65-81.

[14]Ibid., p.81 [15]E. g. Jer. 27:17.

[16]Cf. H.H.Rowley, The Rediscovery of the Old Testament

F. Brown offers yet another explanation for the cessation of prophecy, but it is equally unconvincing. It is due to "the rise of moralists" which "was in itself an influence unfavorable to any revival of prophecy. They [i.e. the moralists] reasoned out the principles that should govern human conduct."[17] This is a rather anemic reason in view of the fact that even during the height of the prophetic period there flourished a vibrant body of "wise men" who reasoned out the principles of morality and human conduct. Evidence of their fruitful activity and of the respect in which these "wise men" were held is the significant "wisdom literature" which they have left, and the many references to them by the prophets themselves.[18] Thus we see that the existence of "moralists" is in itself no reason for the decline of prophecy; there is ample room for the two to exist side by side as they have done before.

Finally, Brown makes a feeble attempt to explain the decline of prophecy on sociological grounds by suggesting that "a kind of cosmopolitanism was growing up, which was the enemy of zeal."[19] This suggestion lacks firm support. The few facts

---

(London, 1946), pp. 154ff. Idem, "Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets," Journal of Semitic Studies, I (1956), 343. R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel, pp. 454-55.

[17] Loc. cit., p. 79.

[18] Cf. e.g. Isa. 29:14; Jer. 8:8; 9:11; 18:18; Ezek. 7:26. Cf. S. Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom" in Israel's Prophetic Heritage, ed. B. Anderson (New York, 1962), pp.108-115, and especially note 2.

[19] Loc. cit., p. 79

that have come down to us from the Persian period of the Jewish state do not at all show evidence of the existence of a cosmopolitan environment. Quite to the contrary, Judea seems to have been a poor and neglected Persian province with little outside influence.[20]

J. Skinner blames the extinction of prophecy on the downfall of the Jewish state: "It is evident that the theocratic conception of the prophetic office could not survive the downfall of the Jewish State, which alone had supplied the requisite conditions for the normal exercise of the prophetic calling."[21] This line of reasoning is rather tenuous. It leaves unexplained the existence of the post-exilic prophets, and why prophecy did not regain its strength with the return to Zion and the ultimate formation of a political community. Also, an explanation is needed to show in what way the theocratic element in prophecy is different from the theocratic element in priesthood so that the latter survived, while the former disappeared from the scene.

A. R. Johnson, too, lays the blame for the decline of prophecy on the downfall of the Jewish State, but for an entirely different reason.

---

[20]Cf. H. Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia, 1944), V. I, p. 407; E. Urbach in Tarbiz, XVII (1945), 9. But cf. E.J. Bickerman, "The Historical Foundations of Post-biblical Judaism" in The Jews, ed. L. Finkelstein, V. I, p. 75. However, whatever the disposition of this problem may be, and regardless of how wide an influence one may be able to show for the Persian period, Judea can hardly be considered more cosmopolitan now than it was during prophetic times of the pre-exilic period.

[21]Prophecy and Religion, p. 218.

> Exile brought the average type of professional prophet into disrepute.... The disillusionment[with the promises of peace] was obviously complete.... The disaster of the Babylonian exile...proved him to be unreliable, and as a result of his loss of prestige, the P school was ultimately able to reduce him to the rank of Temple singer. In this way, being merged with the other Levitical orders, he was brought into definite subjection of the priesthood, and so disappeared. 22

This pat account will fit only the cultic view of prophecy of which Johnson is a major exponent. Since according to this view the prophets were generally attached to a sanctuary and acted as part of its corps of functionaries, the genuinely true prophet might have become confused in the popular mind with the false prophets of peace. However, this explanation is wholly untenable according to the prevailing view which holds that the classical prophets were not cultists, and that they always constituted a distinct group patently separate from the false prophets of peace.[23] It is thus unreasonable that they shared in the disenchantment with the false prophets of peace; quite to the contrary, they should have triumphed since their prophecies were vindicated by the disaster of the Babylonian exile.

Y. Kaufman also links the cessation of prophecy to the destruction of the Jewish State, but the connection is of a theo-psychological nature. Under the impact of the national calamity, the Jewish people came to realize its own unworthiness, and of its own accord, as it were, gave up all aspiration to prophecy.

---

[22] The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel, pp. 55-60.

[23] Cf. H. H. Rowley (ed.), The Old Testament and Modern Study (Oxford, 1951), pp. 119ff.

> The cessation of prophecy flowed from faith and not from a lack of faith. Hebrew prophecy was always conceived as a divine kindness.... The cessation of prophecy is, therefore, a constant motif in the prophecies of woe.... The destruction of Jerusalem imposed upon the people the profound feeling that the divine wrath had been showered upon it, and that God hid His countenance from it. In this profound feeling of divine wrath is rooted the cessation of prophecy. 24

Such being the case, Kaufman must now grapple with the difficult problem of the existence of post-exilic prophets:

> Since the cessation of prophecy was conceived as a phenomenon of the destruction and rage, the faith in the renascence of prophecy after the passing of the rage was maintained.... With the destruction, prophecy became an eschatological phenomenon.... From hereon the fate of prophecy has been tied to the fate of the hope of redemption.... Therefore, the messianic trend of the period of the Return revives prophecy.... Deutero-Isaiah appears, whose prime tidings are the tidings of the redemption...Haggai and Zechariah are the prophets of the future king Zerubabel.... All the deeds of those generations were acts of repentance and conciliation with God. All these deeds were accompanied by the faith that the divine rage would soon pass..., but the redemption did not come, the subjection continued, the house of David did not arise, the exiles were not ingathered.... If God has not been conciliated and has not appeared in His glory in Zion, the period of destruction is still continuing. Destruction, constituting the absence of divine favor, also includes the absence of the favor of prophecy. This thought caused the removal of the spirit of prophecy. 25

Everything seems to be neatly and logically explained, but there remains one glaring difficulty which is glossed over. What he has successfully explained is why the post-exilic prophets

---

[24] Op. cit., V. IV, p. 389 (trans. from the Hebrew).

[25] Ibid., pp. 390-96 (trans. from the Hebrew).

were recognized and accepted as true prophets at the time of their appearance. But what he fails to explain, while indeed even compounding the difficulty, is why these prophets continued to enjoy prophetic status once the people and its leadership came to the disappointing realization that the redemption was an illusion and that there was never a divine reconciliation as represented by the revival of the spirit of prophecy. There thus remains the haunting and unanswered question as to why these post-exilic prophets were not afterwards branded as false prophets. How is it possible finally to come to the realization that the period of destruction continues, and the absence of the divine favor, including that of prophecy, is still in force, while upholding the genuiness of the post-exilic prophets who prophesied to the contrary?

E. Urbach attributes the exit of prophecy from the Jewish scene, during the early part of the Greek period, to the corrosive influence of Greek culture.

> With the appearance of the Greeks, their ways began to make inroads...Judeau again became an object of competition between the rulers of the North and those of the South. It was taken out of its isolation and was placed again on the stage of world history. The desire to close prophecy issued not only from the realization that 'there is no prophet' (Ps. 74:9), but also from the sensing of the danger that outside ideas and views were now liable to enter prophecy. [26]

---

[26] In Tarbiz, XVII (1945), 7 (trans. from the Hebrew).

Now a word of caution is in order. This explanation may have validity only for the rabbis, in whose faulty chronology of history the death of Malachi coincides with the advent of the Greek period. However, in point of fact true prophecy lapsed long before the beginning of the Greek period, during the time when Judea was still a sheltered and slumbering Persian province.

There are those who instead of blaming outside factors such as were mentioned above, look for the cause of the decline of prophecy in the changed state of prophecy itself.

R. Kittel, for example, links the departure of prophecy to the thesis which is held by many scholars that originally prophecy was in the main oral in nature, and only in the latter days it became scriptural. This fundamental change from oral preaching to literary composition sounded the death knell of prophecy, for in the same proportion in which the prophet becomes a writer, he ceases to be a prophet.[27]

However, this hypothesis of the oral transmission of prophecy has been questioned by many a scholar. It has been shown by evidence from the Prophets themselves that classical prophecy was not transmitted orally, but that it was largely scriptural.[28]

---

[27] Geschichte des Volkes Israel, V. II, p. 431.

[28] Cf. Geo Widengren, Literary and Psychological Aspects of the Hebrew Prophets (Uppsala, 1948) pp. 65ff.; S. W. Baron, op. cit., V. I, p. 103; C. Kuhl, The Prophets of Israel, pp. 36-40; Y. Kaufman, op. cit., V. III, pp. 51ff.; J. Bright, A History of Israel, p. 246, n. 90. Cf. Seder Eliahu R., chap. 14, p. 70; Yalḳ. Shim., II, 707.

A. Lods views the decline of prophecy as resulting from a profound transformation that prophetism underwent in the course of the Exile.

> Few traces were left of the violent clashes of the prophets of the pre-exilic period and traditional religion.... No longer is ritual the object of attack: Ezekiel is one of the leaders of the clerical and ritualistic movement. 29

This reason is insufficient by itself, for it leaves unexplained the cause of the transformation which prophecy underwent. It will have to fall back for support on some outside factor such as the overdominance of the Law, or some other factor. But instead of having prophecy overwhelmed and rendered extinct by a rival force, Lods would rather have that it merely submitted and joined the enemy's camp, an event which seems unlikely.

According to I. Efros, prophecy fell victim to the emergent schools of thought of Hokmah and apocalypse.[30] Reducing prophecy to two elemental principles, revelation and causal morality, he proceeds to show that these were superseded and replaced by Hokmah and apocalypse. "The reaction to these two ideas are the essence of both Hokmah and apocalypse."[31]

Revelation was abandoned because Holiness, that is,

---

[29] The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism, p. 249.

[30] "Prophecy, Wisdom and Apocalypse" in M. Kaplan Jubilee Vol. (New York, 1953), pp. 215-223.

[31] Ibid., p. 216.

the transcendental tendency, "became particularly strong in the Babylonian exile with the result that the prophet began to lose his certainty of direct contact with God. Hence already in Zechariah we find that God speaks to an angel and the angel speaks to the prophet."[32]

Into this "spiritual vacancy" both Hokmah and apocalypse moved. Hokmah entered its claim that "wisdom is a spiritual essence emanating from God" which addressed itself "at all times and to each person.... Hence no prophecy is needed. Indeed she makes men prophets."[33] Apocalypse, too, with its elaborate angelology has its starting point in transcendentalism, making God too remote for revelation.

Insofar as the other idea of prophecy, that of causal morality, is concerned, "Hokmah" retained it in its own way while apocalypse, because of "the impact during the Antioches' persecutions, was forced to abandon [it]."[34] Then the author goes on to elaborate on the thoroughly deterministic view of life, allegedly adopted by apocalypse in lieu of prophetic causal morality. To make use of the author's own words in summing up his position:

> Prophecy was silenced by the growth of Holiness. As to its two tenets: revelation and causal morality, Hokmah dispensed with the former but retained the latter...whereas apocalypse dispensed with both, differing completely from prophecy... [35]

---

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., p. 220.

[35] Ibid., p. 223.

This is undeniably a well conceived and deftly executed rationalization. However, its challenging appeal notwithstanding, it will reveal upon closer examination serious weaknesses. For one thing, Efros himself eloquently demonstrated elsewhere[36] that the transcendental view of God was crucial to the outlook of certain prophets, such as Isaiah, who "may be taken as the great exponent of the qedushah-school."[37] In fact, he admits that "neither one of them [i.e. Holiness and Glory] ever existed separately...but always more or less intermingled."[38] He furthermore asserts that "in Deutero-Isaiah...we find the refiner and harmonizer of these two schools."[39]

Now, if these two concepts of Glory, representing divine nearness, and Holiness, representing divine remoteness, could exist side by side in prophetic times, and at times even merge, what happened in the Babylonian exile to turn them into irreconcilable antagonists? It is also hard to accept the thesis that a highly developed angelology necessarily signals the doom of prophecy. For it is difficult to deny the existence of angels and other intermediaries even during prophetic times.

But above all, a most serious flaw in the very basis of this rationalization of the silencing of prophecy is that it

---

[36]"Holiness and Glory in the Bible," JQR XLI (1951), 363-377.

[37]Ibid., p. 371.

[38]Ibid., p. 363; cf. G. F. Moore, Judaism, V. I, p. 442.

[39]Ibid., p. 377.

presupposes a rather sophisticated view of transcendentalism, something which would appear to be considerably advanced for its time. It posits such a refined view of the concept of Holiness that it makes God so transcendentally remote, inaccessible and incommunicable, elevating him to such a philosophical abstraction that it is hardly in keeping with the tenor of the time.

L. Finkelstein views the departure of prophecy not as the result of a debilitating process nor as due to the emergence of overwhelming counterforces, but, paradoxically, as the result of the singular triumph of the prophetic movement. In his view, because of the resounding success with which it has met, it finished serving its purpose and it was thus forced to declare itself out of existence.

> The universal acceptance of the prophetic doctrine in Babylonia necessarily involved the decay of the prophetic movement as a formal institution. Prophecy had been the voice of the protesting, ... disinherited minority. In the deportation, where the minority became the majority, there was need not for protest and criticism, but for guidance and legislation. The prophet became the scribe; the critic became the teacher. 40

This view suffers from a serious difficulty. By overstating the successes of the prophetic movement, and by claiming for it universal acceptance in the Babylonian exile, Finkelstein commits a grave error, as he must of necessity

---

40 The Pharisees (2d ed.; Philadelphia, 1940), p. 462. This view was long ago expressed in essence by Z. Frankel in his Darkei ha-Mishna, p. 2. Cf. R. Gordis, Kohelet (New York, 1955), p. 25.

minimize the scope of the prophetic message. Otherwise it would have been impossible for the lofty teachings of the prophets to attain such singular success, except in a utopian society, which the Babylonian exile does not appear to have been. If, however, prophetism encompasses the vast fields of ethics, morality, social justice and a deeper religiosity in the worship of God, as it emerges from the prophetic record, then any claim of "universal acceptance" for its ideals is open to serious doubt. Indeed, the contrary is indicated by the accounts of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, wherein is depicted the sorry state of the moral and religious affairs of those who returned to Zion from the Babylonian exile.[41] What is true for this community must be true in a large measure for Babylonian exile itself, whence this community originated.

A famous medieval rabbi, Judah the Pious, following a similar approach, but with greater caution and more precision, offers a striking explanation of the disappearance of prophecy. Assuming that the fundamental and supreme cause of prophetism was the fight for the eradication of all vestiges of idolatry from Israel, prophetism went out of existence after the return from Babylonian captivity when this task was fully accomplished. In his words: "Because the desire for the idolatry was slaughtered,

---

[41] Cf. Ezra 9:10f.; Nehem. 5:1f.; 10:32f.; 13:15f.

there was no further need for prophecy."[42]

That idolatry lost its hold on Jewish life from the start of the Second Temple is evident from the sources. In all the accounts making reference to whatever ills with which the community of Zion was afflicted, the sin of idolatry is conspicuously missing. What does call for an explanation in this connection is: How did it happen that idolatry, which was so prevalent right down to the destruction of the First Temple, despite the arduous battles of the preexilic prophets, disappeared so quickly a mere generation or two later?

The rabbis, having sensed the difficulty of this strange historical phenomenon, provided us with a ready and clear-cut answer. It was the intercessory prayers of the men of the Great Assembly to this effect which availed, and as a result of their special prayers, the temptation of idolatry was done away with by divine grace.[43]

Aside from the miraculous consideration, this phenomenon is also susceptible of a rational explanation, as being the work of natural sociological causes. While the Jews lived in their own political state, those Jews who were attracted by

---

[42] Sefer Hasidim, ed. Wistinetzki, no. 544. Cf. M.S.Kahan, Meshekh Hokhma to Num. 11:17, who finds support for such a view in Zechar. 13:2,3.

[43] BT Yoma 69b; cf. Cant. R. 7:13, where a difference of opinion is reported as to the exact time when the disappearance of idolatry took place.

the various idolatrous cults of the neighboring states had no alternative but to retain their Jewish identity. At this time there was more to being a Jew than the practising of his ancestral faith. The idolatrous Jew could express himself qua Jew in political, linguistic and social terms. There was neither a need for him to surrender his Jewish nationality, nor was there an easy way to do so since he lived in a homogenous Jewish community. That is how the struggle between the faithful Jews and the idolatrous Jews all during the First Temple came about since both factions were forced to live side by side in the same political, economic and social community.

This situation changed radically in the Babylonian exile. Here the Jewish community lost its social homogeneity, and its political entity, a good deal of its native language and many of the other cohesive elements which go with a state. Apart from the ethnic distinction between the Jew and his non-Jewish neighbor, which was not so vast since they were racially similar,[44] only his religion kept the Jew apart and separate. Now the idolatrous Jew had little reason and almost no way to maintain his Jewish identity. He naturally drifted into assimilation with his non-Jewish neighbors, who were in the majority. In consequence, not much time elapsed before idolatry disappeared from Jewish life together with the desertion

---

[44] Cf. BT Pesaḥim 87b.

of all rabid idolaters who gave up the struggle and conveniently vanished into the general non-Jewish community.

Conclusion. - Despite the arduous attempts on the part of many thinkers to discover the reason or reasons for the cessation of prophecy, there does not seem to be one conclusive reason which can be proved with a degree of finality. In all likelihood, some of these reasons contain elements of truth, and may have played a role in the final dramatic denouement which led to the extinction of prophecy. So long as the last one hundred years of Persian rule in Palestine is practically a blank page in Jewish history, with almost no historical record of any sort, it will be a futile effort to seek the historical reason for the extinction of prophecy which must have occurred during these years. It is true that we may, by interpolation, compare the state of affairs before these so-called "silent years" in Jewish history to the state thereafter any difference in nature being due to what must have occurred in between. However, there is little way of knowing what were the various forces at work which brought about those events that we assume to have taken place during this time.

The view of the rabbis. - Some of the rabbis also see a connection between the destruction of the Jewish State and the extinction of prophecy, but with one telling difference. While according to many of the theories recited above, the disappearance of prophecy was the indirect result of the new

conditions created by the Exile, in the rabbinic view, the disappearance of prophecy, as well as the Exile, was the concomitant resultant of one and the same cause.

The Exile and the ultimate loss of prophetism are both divine punishments for Jewish sinfulness. This was foreseen long previously by Jacob: "And he prophesied that the Jews would sin and the Holy Spirit would depart from them, as it is written: 'and the sun set' (Gen. 28:11)."[45] Isaiah's famous parable of the vineyard (Is. 5:1-6), which is interpreted by the rabbis symbolically, contains this prophecy of the destruction of the Temple and the abolition of prophecy. The rendering of this parable in the Targum reflects the rabbinic view. It reads, in parts, as follows:

> I have taken Israel which is likened to a vineyard ...and I have built my Temple amongst them, and my altar I have placed to atone for their sins, I thought that they would perform good deeds before me, but they performed bad deeds. ...Now I will tell you what I will do to my people; I will remove my Presence from them, and they will be pillaged; I will destroy their Temple, and it will be trampled ...and they will wander and be foresaken; and I will order the prophets not to prophesy to them any prophecy. [46]

At this juncture there comes to mind a glaring paradox, which needs to be considered. We have already seen above in a different

---

[45]Tan., va-yetze, 4, ed. Buber p. 146, and see note 23.

[46]Targ. J., ad loc.; BT Sukkah 49a; Tosef. Sukkah 3:15, ed. Lieberman, p. 270, and parallels; cf. Lam. R. 11:7.

connection that sin was one of the prime causes which brought prophetism into being. It is plainly apparent in the rabbinic assertion: "If Israel had not sinned, it would have been given only the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua alone."[47] Such being the case, how can sin be held responsible for two mutually exclusive effects, the birth of prophetism and at the same time its very extinction?

However, what should be borne in mind is that this is logically tenable once we realize that the difference lies in the kind and degree of sins involved in each instance. With the existence of a normal amount of sin of a corrigible nature, the relations between God and His people may be tried but they are still maintained. It will therefore evoke an attempt such as prophetism to bring about an improvement. But the prevalence of an excessive amount of sin of an inveterate nature will provoke the divine quality of righteous indignation and will result in cutting this direct relationship by the withdrawal of prophetism.

Thus far it is the profusion and the severity of the sins which caused the cessation of prophecy. However, according to a different rabbinic tradition, the removal of prophecy was the result of a specific penalty for a particular sin, the sin of the mistreatment of the prophets at the hands of their own people. In accordance with the general rabbinic principle

---

[47] BT Nedarim 22b.

of "measure for measure,"[48] the rabbis commenting on the verse, "And they said to Moses speak thou with us and we will hear" (Ex. 20:16), state: "By this they have merited to have prophets arise from them...but when they were mocking the divine messengers, the Holy Spirit departed from them."[49]

One rabbinic interpretation sees it in the prophecy of Amos, "And they shall wander from sea to sea...to seek the word of God but shall not find it" (Amos 8:12).

> I can see how you seek me, but you will not find; and I will laugh at you, saying: you have not listened to me while I lived with you, behold you will seek them [i.e. the prophets] throughout the whole world. And thus says Solomon: 'Because I called you and you refused to listen...I will laugh when your horror comes ...They will seek me, but they shall not find me' (Prov. 1:24-28). 50

Although the rabbis place the direct blame for the withdrawal of prophecy squarely on the shoulders of the Jewish people by regarding it as the penalty for one sin or another, it is nevertheless also the partial and indirect fault or shortcoming of the prophets themselves. If sin was rampant, the prophets disregarded and abused, then prophetism stood indicted as ineffectual and futile. As a result of having failed to attain its desired goals, prophetism had to bow out and make room for another force to enter upon the stage. In

---

[48]Mishna Soṭa 1:7, and freq.

[49]Mekilta de RSBY, ad loc.; cf. ADRN, II, chap. 47, p. 130; cf. Mid. Tadshe, chap. 20 in Bet ha-Midrash, Jellinek, V. V, p. 189, where it is stated: "God has not stopped the holy prophets from the world first, but it was the Jews who persecuted and killed them!"

[50]Agg. Bereshit 74:2; cf. Tosef., Eduyyot, beg.; BT Shabbat 138b. Cf. Ibn Izra's and D. Kimḥi's comment. to Amos

this connection it is worth noting that the rabbis ascribe the final disappearance of idolatry from Israel to the intercession of the men of the Great Assembly, who succeeded in this regard although the prophets to whom this task was entrusted had failed.

There is still another specific sin which, in the view of R. Shim'on b. Lakish, is to be blamed for the absence of the Divine Presence and the Holy Spirit of prophecy from the Second Temple. This sin was committed by the very generation in whose day the Second Temple was built, when the greater part of the exiles decided to ignore the redemptive call to return to Zion, and chose instead to remain in Babylonia, the land of their captivity.[51] In a sense, this was nothing less than a flat rejection of the Divine's advances for reconciliation with His estranged people. So far-reaching was the projected rehabilitation of the Jewish people, according to the assertion of the rabbis who share this view of R. Shim'on b. Lakish, that had the entire Jewish community in Babylonia responded to the call and to a man left for Zion, the redemption would have been final and complete, to the point that the Second-

---

8:11, 12, where this prophecy of Amos is understood as a telling reply to Amaziah, priest of Bethel, who previously rudely insulted Amos, and cautioned him against going on with his prophesying (Amos 7:10,11). Thus, the disappearance of prophetism is construed as a reprisal for the abusive treatment of the prophet.

[51]BT Yoma 9b. Because of this view, the rabbis had to explain Ezra's delay in coming to Zion as being due to his need to complete his studies under Baruch b. Neriah, who was too old and weak to journey there (Cant. R. 5:4).

Temple would never have been destroyed.[52] But, alas, the Jewish people missed this golden opportunity, and by its callous indifference halted the move for total redemption in its tracks, with the sad result that the Divine Presence and the Holy Spirit failed to return to the Second Temple.

R. Yohanan, objecting to this view, declares that even had the entire Jewish people returned to Zion, the Divine Presence would still have been missing from the Second Temple. For the Divine Presence will dwell only in a structure built by a Jew, as it is written, "May God expand Japhet, and dwell in the tents of Shem" (Gen. 9:2). Because the Second Temple was built under the auspices of Cyrus, who was a descendant of Japhet, it could not house the Divine Presence.[53]

On the surface it would appear as if R. Yohanan is ruling out sin as the cause of the absence of the Divine Presence from the Second Temple. It seems as if R. Yohanan is basing it on a mere technicality, or if we wish, we may benignly expand this innocent technicality into a high sounding socio-political concept, as indeed Urbach has done. We may read into it, or out of it, the idea that there can be no true development of the native Jewish spiritual genius for bringing about divine revelation and prophecy when it is in the shackles of foreign domination. In the words of Urbach: "The dependence of Israel on foreign kings caused the decline of its spiritual faculties and their impoverishment."[54]

---

[52]Cant. R. 8:11 [53]BT Yoma 9b, 10a.

[54]In Tarbiz, XVII (1945), 2.

However, whatever the import of R. Yoḥanan's statement may be, it tells only half the story. Granted that the Divine Presence will not dwell in a Temple built by the Aedificetur of a heathen, R. Yoḥanan is still faced with the underlying question of why God chose to arrange the reconciliation with His people through the good offices of a heathen, an arrangement which could not lead to a complete rehabilitation, in the first place.

But there can be no doubt that R. Yoḥanan, too, will have to make sin the ultimate cause for the way in which the redemption evolved. The reason he did not mention sin is that the whole burden of his statement consists of an effort to disprove the view of R. Shim'on b. Laḳish that this particular sin was the indifference on the part of most of the Jews to the call to return to Zion. This he does successfully by pointing to the fact that the Second Temple was built under the auspices of a heathen, a fact which preceded the sin of Jewish indifference to the call, and thus this particular sin could not have been the cause for the absence of the Divine Presence from the Temple, as it was already precluded by the principle that the Divine Presence will not dwell in an edifice built by a heathen. Consequently, there must have been a previous sin, a sin with which R. Yoḥanan was not concerned at the moment. That sin is the ultimate cause is clearly expressed in a Tannaitic tradition which R. Yoḥanan undoubtedly accepted. It reads: "The Jews were destined to have a miracle performed for them in the days of Ezra in the

same way as it was performed for them in the days of Joshua b. Nun, but sin prevented it."[55]

To round out the rabbinic rationalization of the cessation of prophecy, there is one more apsect to consider. If it was Jewish sin that was at the root of the cessation, then: Why did not prophecy return with the rebuilding of the Temple, which seemingly betokens God's reconciliation with His people?

Although the rabbis do not specifically treat this difficulty, they nevertheless supply us with what would be their answer. The answer is contained in the rabbinic tradition that the Second Temple lacked five crucial elements: the ark, the heavenly fire, the Presence, the Holy Spirit and the Urim and Tumim.[56] The fact that these elements exemplifying the

---

[55]BT Berakhot 4a, and parallels.

[56]All the sources agree on the number of missing elements which is five, but there is wide disagreement as to what these five elements were. Cf. sources cited supra, note 7. The assertion that "the Shekhinah never leaves the west wall [of the Temple mount]" and similar utterances by the rabbis (cf. Mid. Ps. 11:3; Targ. to Cant. 6:11), do not contradict the rabbinic tradition that the Shekhinah was missing from the Second Temple. For the rabbis themselves distinguish between the indwelling of the Shekhinah in the Second Temple, which was in the nature of a visitation, and that of the First Temple was in the nature of a permanent residence (See Tan., Buber, aharei mot, p. 59, and ed. note 58; Lev. R. 20:4, p. 454, and ed. note 2). Also, as L. Ginzberg (in his Perushim ve-Hidushim ba-Yerushalmi V. III, pp. 395-97) has rightly pointed out, the rabbis do not use the term Shekhinah in an identical sense in their various utterances. This fact has been followed up by M. Kadushin in his The Rabbinic Mind, pp. 253-254, and cf. p. 251, n. 126. He makes an attempt to define the various uses of this term as revealed by the context in which it is found.

As to whether the ten miracles which regularly occurred in the Temple as reported in the Mishna (Aboth 5:5) also apply to the Second Temple, see Ch. Y. D. Azulai, Petah 'Enayim to BT Yoma 21a.

manifest intimacy between God and His people were not returned to the Second Temple, is a sure and unmistakable sign that the reconciliation was only partial, that the atonement for the Jewish sins was incomplete. This is also borne out by the Ezra and Nehemiah accounts of the low religious state of affairs which obtained in Zion at the time of the Return. Such being the case, we could hardly expect a full remission of all past sins.

This fact also has ramifications in decisive Halakhic implications. First of all, according to R. Eleazar, the sanctity of Palestine during the period of the Second Temple with regard to the observance of the agricultural laws, such as the heave and tithe offerings, was self-imposed, having only rabbinic validity but no Biblical validity, unlike the sanctity of the land during the period of the First Temple, which was of Biblical validity.[57]

Then, even according to the view that the holiness of the land during the Second Temple was of Biblical validity, it was of an inferior status as compared with the holiness of the land during the First Temple. This can be seen from a striking difference in Halakha, according to the prevailing opinion, which reads: "The First Holiness held for its time,, but not for the future [i.e. after the destruction of the First Temple] ; the Second Holiness held for its time and

---

[57] PT Shebiit 6:1, p. 36b, and parallels. Cf. Bereshit Rabbati, Albeck, p. 15.

for the future [i.e. after the destruction of the Second Temple]."[58] Many attempts have been made by various commentators to explain this puzzling paradox of the lapsation of the holiness of the land after the destruction of the First Temple, whereas the holiness of the land remained in force after the destruction of the Second Temple.[59] However, there is one explanation that fully does justice to this difference. The first holiness being of a lofty nature, as it was grounded on the revelation of the Divine Presence, was unable because of its delicate nature to survive the damaging impact of the destruction of the First Temple which housed, as it were, the Divine Presence, But the second holiness being of a lower order, of a more earthly and coarser quality, as it lacked Divine Presence, was therefore unaffected by the destruction of the Second Temple.[60]

In sum, the return to Zion and the rebuilding of the Temple did not signify a full atonement for the sins of Israel which brought about the original destruction of the Temple and the loss of many of its concomitants. Furthermore, the Jews at the time of the return to Zion were guilty of their own sins as well. All of this worked against the restoration of the

---

[58] Seder Olam R., chap. 30; BT Yebamot 82b, and cf. Maimonides to Mishna Eduyyot 8:6; BT Ḥagigah 3b, and parallels. The verse in Ḥaggai 2:9, "The glory of this other house will be greater than that of the first," is interpreted by the rabbis to refer either to the length of its duration in time or to the magnitude in size (BT Baba Batra 3a,b; cf. PT Megillah 1: ned p. 72d), but not to its spiritual quality.

[59] For a review of some of these attempts, see Entziklopedia Talmudit, V. II, p. 217b.

[60] M. S. Kahan in his Meshekh Ḥokhmah to Ex. 15:16.

revealed holiness with its many objectifications, including prophecy, which were all forfeited when the Temple was destroyed. What happened after the cessation of prophecy? - A great deal of confusion has been generated by certain writers who claim that even though officially prophecy ceased to exist after the death of the last writing prophet, it nevertheless continued to thrive as an ideal and as a living reality as well. To prove this assertion, they amass copious citations from rabbinic and non-rabbinic sources which, in their view, convincingly demonstrate that for the longest time the Holy Spirit persisted. By virtue of this fact, a great many individuals, amongst them famous rabbinic sages, were acknowledged to have been the recipients of oracular revelations.[61] This has been shown to hold true even for as late as the medieval times.[62]

Certain authors have carried this view so far as to suggest that the rabbis themselves knew it, but they were motivated by Christian polemics to assert the cessation of prophecy early in the period of the Second Temple in order to invalidate later Christian claims to prophetic authority.[63] One

---

[61] See infra, note 68. Cf. Midrash ha-Gadol to Gen. 49:10.

[62] Cf. A. Heschel, "Did Maimonides Strive for Prophetic Inspiration" (Heb.), L. Ginzberg Jubilee Vol. (New York, 1945), pp. 159-188; Idem, "Inspiration in the Middle Ages" (Heb.), A. Marx Jubilee Vol. (New York, 1950), pp. 175-208.

[63] Cf. A. Harnack, The Expansion of Christianity, trans. J. Moffat (New York, 1908), V. I, p. 421; S. A. Cook, Old Testament: a Reinterpretation (Cambridge, 1936), p. 173; P. E. Davies, "Jesus and the Role of the Prophets," JBL, LXIV (1945), pp. 241-254; F. W. Young, "Jesus the Prophet," JBL, LXVIII (1949), pp. 285-299; E. Urbach, "Rabbinic Comment Concerning Heathen Prophets" (Heb.), Tarbiz, XXV (1953), p. 272; A. Cohen, Everyman's Talmud (New York, 1949), p. 124.

writer has adopted the extreme view that most rabbinic passages treating of prophecy, as innocuous as they may seem, need to be reexamined and reinterpreted from the perspective of polemics and apologetics,[64] as if the rabbis who spent all their time in studying the Scriptures had no objective interest of their own in analyzing and commenting on the subject of prophecy. This is certainly tendentious and unwarranted. What about the Babylonian sages whose ideological contacts with Christianity were peripheral and negligible?[65] And even with regard to the Palestinian sages, only certain ones are known to have engaged in this field of polemics, while the greater number lived in the ideological seclusion of their studies and teachings.[66]

The fallacy of the position that prophecy continued to exist has its roots in the misconception which lumps together all hues and shades of divine revelation under the single heading of prophecy. It is erroneous to consider such terms as the Holy Spirit or the Divine Presence in the rabbinic sources always to be identical or congruent to classical prophecy.

---

[64] N. Glatzer, "A Study of the Talmudic Interpretation of Prophecy," Review of Religion, X (1946), pp. 117, 136.

[65] Cf. incident recounted in BT Avodah Zarah 4a concerning lack of familiarity with Biblical polemics on the part of Babylonian scholars because of their meagre contacts with Christianity. Cf. BT Pesahim 56a; BT Hullin 13b. Cf. S. W. Baron, op. cit., V. II, pp.130-133, 164.

[66] Cf. Cant. R. 7:47, where certain of these polemicists are mentioned by name, which would tend to indicate that the sages who engaged in polemics were the exception rather than the rule.

Indeed, in the rabbinic sources these terms are used rather loosely, to indicate the entire gamut of heavenly revelations and communications.[67] Knowledge of the unknown or prediction of future events by itself does not make one a prophet even when it issues from the Holy Spirit. This power was given to certain people during prophetic times and persisted long after prophecy lapsed.[68] At times it may even be referred to as prophecy, but only by association and extension.[69]

Insofar as prophecy is concerned, even though admittedly it can be differentiated into various types, and there are variances amongst prophets, yet all these types share common essential features by virtue of which they all constitute a distinct class. This class is set apart from all other experiences of extra-sensory perception which the Holy Spirit is capable of effectuating.

---

[67] Cf. H. Parzen, "The Ruah Hakodesh in Tannaitic Literature," JQR, XX (1930), pp. 65,66,71.

[68] Ahitophel is reputed to have possessed the power of predicting the decisions of the Urim and Tumim (PT Sanhedrin 10:2, p. 28b; cf. Mid. Ps. 3:4), yet he was not treated as a prophet. Similarly, the High Priest is not qualified to consult the Urim and Tumim unless he is possessed of the Holy Spirit (BT Yoma 73b), yet this did not make him into a prophet. R. Gamliel (Tosefta, Pesahim 2:15, ed. Lieberman p. 147), R. Akiba (Lev. R. 21:8, p. 485), R. Shim'on b. Yohai (PT Shebiit 9:1, p. 38d) and other rabbis are credited with knowledge of the unknown by virtue of the Holy Spirit; nevertheless, they would be the first to disclaim with disdain any title to the name of prophet.

It should be noted that while prophecy proper was at an early date denied to the non-Jew, illuminations of the Holy Spirit remained the domain to be shared by Jew and non-Jew alike. Regarding these activities and effects of the Holy Spirit, a rabbinic tradition avows: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses, whether Jew or non-Jew, whether man or woman..., the Holy Spirit will rest upon one in accordance with the deeds he performs (Seder Eliahu R., chap. 9(10),p.48).

[69] Cf. BT Shabbat 119b, and Yalk. Shim., II, 540, where

The task before us, then, is to define what is meant by classical prophecy which, the rabbis declare, ceased to exist.

Wolfson stresses the importance of the content of the message by which classical prophecy is to be recognized:

> The cessation of prophecy...means the kind of prophecy which inspired the teachings contained in the scriptures came to an end. ...Other forms of prophecy, however, did not disappear. ...Prophecy in the sense of prediction and in the sense of knowing beyond sense perception and reason never ceased to exist. 70

Kaufman has noted,[71] as did Rashi[72] and R. Menchem ha-Meiri long before him,[73] still another essential characteristic of classical prophecy, namely, its apostolic nature. The prophet is charged with a mission, he is sent to appear before the people, to address them and make demands upon them. This element is completely lacking in subsequent residual oracular revelations, the existence of which the rabbis acknowledge.

To complete the picture of prophecy, yet a third feature needs to be mentioned. Besides the nature of its content and the purpose for which it is revealed, prophecy is to be distinguished from all other workings of the Holy Spirit by the manner in which it is given and received. In prophecy the prophet experiences a locution and the existence of a speaker who

---

the rabbis are referred to as the equivalents of prophets. Cf. BT Peshaim 66b.

[70] Philo, V. II, p. 53. [71] Op. cit., p. 383.

[72] BT Megillah 3a, where he explains why Daniel is not to be considered a prophet.

[73] Bet ha-Behirah to BT Sanhedrin 11a. Cf. his introduction to his commentary on Psalms.

transmits this locution to him; there is a feeling of confrontation which manifests itself in a dialogue, in a wrestling with God. These characteristics are completely missing from all other forms of revelations of the unknown which have persisted even after prophecy no longer existed. In these instances the workings of the residual effects of the Holy Spirit come to those individuals worthy of them merely in one or another form of divine illumination, in a kind of a detached communication.[74]

Furthermore, not only is prophecy as such essentially different in its phenomenology from all other types of divine illumination, but, as briefly noted by Kadushin without its being spelled out in detail,[75] it is also different in the special status which it is accorded. The prophet is endowed with certain rights and privileges and is given certain powers and authorizations.[76] But one who is the bearer of a divine illumination, even if it be the effect of the Holy Spirit, will enjoy none of these powers and privileges. The latter, for example,

---

[74]The Bat Kol, the so-called heavenly voice, cannot be considered a Locution since it does not admit of a dialogue. In fact, the rabbis, contrasting prophecy proper to the Bat Kol, liken the first to the presence of a king in the city, while the latter is compared to the statue of the king (Cant. R. 8:12). What is stated in this contrast is that the Bat Kol lacks the possibility of intercommunication, which is present in true prophecy. Cf. M. Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind, pp. 261-263.

For an analysis of the nature of Bat Kol, cf. Z. H. Chajes, Responsa (Heb.), II, 5; M. A. Schatzkes, Ha-Mafteach (New York, 1929), V. I, pp. 97-98; S. Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York, 1950), pp. 194-199.

[75]The Rabbinic Mind, p. 252.

[76]For a complete discussion of these powers, see supra, pp. 183-215.

has no authority, on the strength of a divine illumination which he has received, to command what is or is not to be done, while the prophet's commandment must be obeyed on pain of heavenly death. This seems to be implied in the rabbinic exhortation: "From here on [after the cessation of prophecy] incline your ear and listen to the words of the sages!"[77] The emphasis is not so much on the disappearance of revelation in general, but on the discontinuance of prophetism with its authority to demand our attention and our response, with its power to guide and to command. Ever since the cessation of prophecy, if anyone comes and informs us of a revelation, there is no obligation, even though the revelation may be acknowledged as true, to accept it and to act in accordance therewith. Moreover, neither is the recipient of such a revelation himself bound to carry it out as is the prophet who must obey the revelation given him under the penalty of heavenly death.[78] For now all heavenly revelations have no greater validity than that of the knowledge of natural facts which we are at liberty to take into our behavioral consideration or may choose to disregard. At most, it may serve in an advisory capacity, pointing to what is desirable or to what may be harmful. But true prophecy is much more

---

[77]Seder Olam R., chap. 30.

[78]Mishna Sanhedrin 11:5.

than an informative or advisory revelation, it bears a message charged with a divine imperative, directed either to the prophet himself, or, more frequently, to other people. While the recipients of divine illuminations or fringe revelations may be classed as divine cognoscenti, as divine informants, the prophets are participants in the divine council,[79] exerting an influence on the formulation of the divine message and acting as instruments in its implementation. At the time when the prophet is actively engaged in his prophetic vocation he becomes transfigured so that he may be likened to an angel, and is thus in a position of being in loco Dei, ad hoc.[80] He may then deliver the divine message in the first person, while talking about himself in the third person.[81] All these features are not present in all the other revelatory functions of the Holy Spirit which continued to operate long after the cessation of prophecy.

Rebirth of prophecy. - If, as we have seen, sin was the underlying cause of the destruction of the First Temple with the subsequent disappearance of prophecy, it stands to reason that prophecy will come back to life with the restoration of the Temple and the complete atonement for those sins which will take place at the advent of the Messiah. There are many utterances in the rabbinic sources to this effect in which the

---

[79] Jer. 23:18; Job 15:8; 29:4. Cf. H.W.Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, pp. 167-169; A.Heschel, The Prophets, pp. 21,25.

[80] Cf. Mid. Ps. 138:1.

[81] Cf. Mid. Ps. 90:4.

reappearance of prophecy figures as part of the entire eschatological complex. To cite several such examples: "Five elements...were hidden away: the ark, the Menorah, the heavenly fire, the Holy Spirit, and the cherubim, but when the Holy One, blessed be He, will in His mercies rebuild His home,...He will restore them to their place."[82] The rabbis read this belief in the verse, "I laid me down and slept; I awoke for the Lord sustained me" (Ps. 3:6), which they interpret as follows: "The congregation of Israel said: 'I laid me down,' with regard to prophecy; 'and I slept,' with regard to the Holy Spirit; 'I awoke,' through Elijah; 'for the Lord sustained me,' through the Messiah-king."[83]

The revival of prophecy is conceived on a grand scale and pictured to have a mass effect. Basing themselves on the verse, "Afterwards I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 3:1), the rabbis conclude: "In this world prophecy was given to one in a thousand, but in the future world prophecy will be given to all men."[84] It should be noted that although this verse, together with its rabbinic comment, speaks of prophecy's becoming the possession of all men, it does seem from another rabbinic passage that "all men" is limited to those within

---

[82]Tan., Buber, beha'alotkha, 11, p. 50; cf. Num. R. 15:7.

[83]Mid. Ps., ad loc.

[84]Tan., miḳetz, 2; ed. Buber, p. 192; cf. Lev. R. 1:14, p. 32.

the people of Israel: "In the future world all the Israelites will be prophets."[85] This view is also corroborated by what follows in the verse itself, which goes on to say, "and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," which makes it glaringly clear that the phrase "all flesh" in the beginning of the verse has reference only to Israel.[86]

This profusion of prophecy in all likelihood prompted the rabbis to come to the startling conclusion that "the Prophets and Hagiographa will become defunct, but the Pentateuch, the Scroll of Esther and the Halakhot will not become defunct."[87] Assuming that the correct interpretation of this passage is that in Messianic times the public readings in the synagogue from Prophets and the Hagiographa will be discontinued and will no longer be required,[88] then this change must be laid not to the invalidation or irrelevance of the prophetic teachings in Messianic times, but, on the contrary, to their validation by every Israelite who, because of his own prophetic experience, will have first-hand knowledge of these very teachings of the Prophets. Only in the case of the Pentateuch, which was given by a unique revelation, not to be repeated in Messianic times, will public reading still be required so

---

[85]Num. R. 15, end; Tan., beha'alotkha, end; cf. Mid. Ps. 111:1 Tan., Buber, bereshit, 23, p. 17.

[86]Cf. D. Kimḥi (Radaḳ) to Joel 3:1.

[87]PT Megillah 1:7, p. 70 Cf. S. Schechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, p. 123.

[88]See Rabad's criticism to Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Megillah 2:18.

that each and every one may undergo the vicarious experience of its original transmission.[89] This idea also applies to the Halakhot, to the laws given orally to Moses by a kind of revelation which will not be shared by all the prophets during Messianic times, and will therefore have to be learned as an old revelation. Similarly, the public reading of the Scroll of Esther will remain in force because its reading is based on the celebration of the holiday of Purim, which will remain in force even during Messianic times. This holiday being founded on a nonrecurring historical event, will therefore be outside the prophetic experience prevalent during the Messianic period. Hence, it will be necessary to read the Scroll of Esther in order to relive and reexperience the event recorded in it. But in the case of the Prophets, whose required public reading did not originate in the celebration or in the commemoration of a historical event, but rather in the necessity to rehear their eternal teachings as they were revealed to them, reading thereof will be unnecessary in Messianic times when everyone shall be endowed with the same kind of prophetic knowledge which is contained in the Prophets themselves.

As to the exact stage in the ultimate redemption at which the resurgence of prophecy will occur, the rabbinic sources differ.

---

[89] In order to simulate the original event of the giving of the Law, certain practices have been instituted in the manner of the public reading of the Law in the synagogue. Cf. PT Megillah 4:1, p. 74d, and Shulhan Arukh, orah hayyim, 141:4; Tan., Jethro, 15, and Shulhan Arukh, orah hayyim, 139:1.

While from the sources cited above at the opening of this discussion it is to be placed after the rebuilding of the Temple, there are other sources which would place it before the rebuilding of the Temple. For example: "In three places in the Bible we find the return of the Holy Spirit to be close to the redemption."[90] Similarly, in the famous scale of qualities of R. Pinhas b. Yair, the attainment of the Holy Spirit precedes the coming of the redemption.[91] However, this matter of exact sequence was never of great concern to the rabbis.[92] All that mattered to them was to establish the belief that there will be a resurgence of the Holy Spirit in connection with the redemption.

We must now broach the basic question of what will be the nature of prophecy during the Messianic period, and what form will it assume. There is a dearth of rabbinic utterances on this score. To gain an insight into the possible answer to this question, an extensive and detailed study of what life in all its ramifications will be during Messianic times, according to the rabbinic view, must first be made. This is outside the scope of this work which deals with prophecy as it was in the past, whereas a full treatment of prophecy as it will evolve in the future properly belongs to an analytic study of the Messianic period as portrayed in the rabbinic sources.

---

[90] Lam. R. 3:37.

[91] Mishna Sota, end, and parallels; cf. E. Urbach, "When Did Prophecy Cease?" (Heb.), Tarbiz, XVII (1945), 11, n. 75. Maimonides in his Iggeret Teman, ed. Halkin, p. 84, asserts that "there is no doubt that the return of prophecy will precede the Messiah." Cf. A. S. Halkin in introduction to his edition of Iggeret Teman, p. XII.

[92] This can be seen from the proof-texts which the rabbis

However, there is one phase of this problem which ought to be considered here since it touches on one of the fundamental constituents of prophetism. As can be seen from a reading of the Prophets, it was not so much the task of prophetism to lecture about what constitutes the ideal morality, but rather to paint a black picture of immorality and injustice, and to preach and battle against their perpetrators.[93] Will this essential feature of prophetism still be valid and applicable to the ideal life which both the prophets and the rabbis envision for the Messianic period?

It should be noted from the outset that the rabbis associate the renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the passing of the evil inclination during Messianic times.

> The master, that is, the Holy One...said, 'Oh that they had such a heart as this...' (Deut. 5:26), and the disciple, that is, Moses, said, 'Would that all the Lord's people were prophets' (Num. 11:29). But the words of both of them were not fulfilled. However, in the time to come the words of both of them will be fulfilled, the words of the master, 'And I shall give you a new heart' (Ez. 36:26), and the words of the disciple, 'And I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh' (Joel 3:1).[94]

The realization of these two ideals will not be a simultaneous occurrence. The evil inclination will first be removed, and in consequence will follow the resurgence of the Holy Spirit.

---

adduce in Lam. R. 3:37 to demonstrate the interlinking of the redemption and prophecy. In some of these verses priority is accorded to the redemption, while in others priority is given to the rebirth of prophecy.

[93] Cf. A. Heschel, The Prophets, p. 204.

[94] Mid. Ps. 14:6, and cf. Yalk. Shim., 2, 663. Cf. Pesikta R., 41, p. 174a.

> In this world because there were slanderers amongst you, I removed my Presence,...but in the time to come when I will uproot the evil inclination from amongst you,...I shall bring back my Presence amongst you ...as it is said, 'Afterwards, I shall pour out my spirit upon all flesh' (Joel 3:1).[95]

This passing of the evil inclination during Messianic times is variously described by the rabbis in terms such as, slaughtering,[96] banishing,[97] removing,[98] uprooting,[99] causing to pass,[100] levelling.[101] But despite this profusion of graphic language, the rabbis do not make it clear what effect this doing away with the evil inclination will have with regard to the existence of sin during Messianic times. At first blush it appears as if the rabbis assert the total extinction of all sin, but after closer analysis of the sources, such an interpretation becomes highly unlikely.[102]

---

[95] Deut. R., 6, end. [96] BT Sukkah 52a.

[97] Ibid. [98] Tan., Buber, Kedoshim, p.30

[99] Deut. R. 6, end; Ag. Bereshit, chap. 23; Tan., Buber, ki tissa, p.114; va-yikra, p. 8; Tan., ekev, end; Gen. R. 89:1, p. 1086.

[100] PSRK, 25, p. 165a.

[101] Ag. Bereshit, chap. 68. In some of the above-mentioned sources the passing of the evil inclination is placed in the period termed the world to come, a term which admittedly may at times refer to the period after the resurrection, but the fact that all the proof-texts adduced in all these sources deal with the messianic period, is positive proof that the rabbinic assertion based on these proof-texts is to apply to the messianic period.

[102] Despite one variant in Tan., Buber, ki tissa, p. 114, n. 99, which adds, "And they will sin no more before Me," our contention remains valid, for this variant might as well be an interpolation, as it is not found in any other manuscript. Besides, its absolute tenor may be the product of an expansive mood, and is not to be taken literally.

There are various rabbinic utterances which admit the future existence of sin. For example: "In the Messianic times they will rebel only out of eating, drinking and complacency,"[103] or "In this world they were forgiven by means of a sacrifice, but in the world to come, I will blot out their sin without a sacrifice."[104] This last claim that the method of atonement will undergo a change during Messianic times, self-evidently presupposes the existence of sin at that time.

---

[103]Sifre to Deut. 32:15, p. 362.

[104]Tan., shemini, 10. This view probably coincides with the assertion made by R. Menaḥem of Galia that "in the time to come, all sacrifices will cease to exist, but the thanksgiving offering will never cease (Lev. R. 9:7, p. 185, and parallels). The ed., M. Margulies, in note 7, probably following in the footsteps of D. Kimḥi and I. Abrabnel, quoted by S. Buber in his edition of Mid. Ps., p. 295, note 19, explains this claim by the assumption that there will be no more sin then, and thus there will be no need for sacrifices, which generally come to atone for sins. However, this explanation suffers from an obvious difficulty. Sin offerings are prescribed not for sins wittingly committed, but rather for sins unwittingly committed. It therefore seems remote to assume that with the uprooting of the evil inclination, such happenings, which are purely the result of chance and carelessness, will disappear. Hence, R. Menaḥem of Galia's assertion does not presuppose the assumption that no sin will be in existence at that time, but it is to be identified with the rabbinic tradition which we cited that in the future, sin will be forgiven directly by God without the need of a prescribed sacrifice.

The famous incident with R. Ishmael who accidentally desecrated the Sabbath, and thereupon recorded in his personal notebook that "when the Temple will be rebuilt, I will bring a sin offering" (Tosef. Shabbat 1:13; BT Shabbat 12b. For a more general application, cf. BT Yoma 80a), is not necessarily in conflict with the view of R. Menaḥem of Galia, for R. Ishmael's sin was committed in an era in which sacrifices were still in order but could not be brought for lack of the Temple, which is why his obligation is deferred to the time when the Temple shall be restored.

Now, if the phenomenon of sin is still there to plague man, how are we to construe the assertion that the evil inclination will be eradicated? Fortunately, we find the key to this puzzle in the rabbinic tradition which reports that during the period of the return to Zion, the evil inclination of idolatry was uprooted by the intercession of the men of the Great Assembly.[105] In this instance, the rabbis could not possibly have meant that the sin of idolatry became totally extinct thereafter. For this would be contradicted by all subsequent reality, of which the rabbis were certainly aware, such as the Hasmonean struggle against the inroads of Hellenistic heathenism, or the existence of the temple of Onias, which is regarded by some of the rabbis as idolatrous.[106] Also, the rabbinic writings are replete with references to occurrences of idolatry and apostasy amongst Jews at the time.[107] Consequently, the uprooting of the evil inclination of idolatry,

---

[105] BT Yoma 69b; Cant. R. 7:13. This particular assertion is in perfect harmony with the general rabbinic tradition that whatever is destined to take place during the Messianic era has already been performed in part by the prophets and the righteous in our present era (Lev. R. 27:4, p. 629; Kohel. R. 3:8; Tan., emor, 9, ed. Buber p. 91).

[106] BT Menahot 109b.

[107] Cf. BT Ḳiddushin 39b, 49b; BT Avodah Zarah 26b; PT Hagigah 2:1, p. 77b. Heschel's conjecture in his Torah Min ha-Shamayim, p. 34, that the tradition of the doing away with the inclination of idolatry stems from the school of R. Akiba, while those rabbinic dicta which admit of the existence of idolatry during Talmudic times stem from the school of R. Ishmael, is not borne out by the sources. It will also become unnecessary if we do not attach a literal meaning to this rabbinic tradition.

which the rabbis report to have taken place must be understood not as indicating the complete disappearance of the sin of idolatry, but as having broken and weakened the power of this evil inclination so that it lost its dominant influence and hold upon the Jew.

Furthermore, with regard to the absence of the evil inclination in general from certain individuals, the rabbis make use of the same expressions which they employ concerning Messianic times. Regarding Abraham it is claimed that "he turned the evil inclination into a good inclination,"[108] a description used in one rabbinic source also with regard to the general state during Messianic times.[109] Of David it is said that he slaughtered his evil inclination,[110] a term also applied to Messianic times.[111] The expression, "The evil inclination will have no power in the time to come,"[112] is also applied to the patriarchs and to David.[113] There is no need to go into an elaborate documentation in order to demonstrate that these individuals were not altogether guiltless.[114]

---

[108]PT Berakhot 9:7, p. 14b.

[109]Pesikta R., 41, p. 174a.

[110]Supra, note 108.

[111]BT Sukkah 52a.

[112]Gen. R. 48:11, p. 489, and note variants.

[113]BT Baba Batra 17a.

[114]Cf. BT Shabbat 56a,b; BT Arakhin 17a; BT Avodah Zarah 4b, and S. Edels, ad loc.; Cant. R. 1:24. Cf. Tosafot to BT Baba Batra 17a.

In view of all this, the uprooting of the evil inclination during Messianic times is not to be construed that it deprives man of his capacity for sin, rendering him incapable of committing a sin, but it refers to the emasculation of the evil inclination, thereby depriving it of the overwhelming power it wielded over man in pre-Messianic times.[115] There will thus still remain cause and occasion for sinning even if it be to a far lesser degree.[116]

Such being the case, there will still be room and need for particular prophets to resume the fight against evil which was an important phase of the prophetic charge in the history of prophetism. It will still be the task of the new prophetism to call upon man to further improve his ethical, moral and religious condition in line with the higher standards and demands of the Messianic era.

---

[115] This attenuation of the evil inclination is probably the result of the total removal of Satan in Messianic times, thus depriving the evil inclination of its celestial source of power and reducing it to mere sensual incentives. Cf. Seder Eliahu R., chap. 4, p. 20; Batei Midrashot, Wertheimer, V. II, p. 433; Mid. Va-Yosha', 22. Because of the attenuation of the evil inclination, the good inclination will by contrast appear all-powerful, especially since its connections with its celestial source of power will be even stronger than in pre-Messianic times. For a picturesque account of its future power, cf. Mid. Ps. 73:4, and cf. M. Higger, The Jewish Utopia (Baltimore, 1932), p. 107.

[116] Cf. Zohar to Gen., ed. R. Margoliot p. 128: "The evil inclination will not disappear from the world. Even though all of it will not exist, part of it will continue to exist." Cf. Mabit, Bet Elokim, sha'ar ha-yesodot, chaps. 58,60. Cf. J. Kausner, Ha-Ra'ayon ha-Meshihi be-Yisrael, p. 311; M. Waxman, Galut u-Geulah be-Safrut Yisrael (New York, 1952), pp. 266-267.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

After having analyzed various rabbinic texts for the views they yield regarding many particular phases of prophetism, a delineation of the general picture of prophetism, as it emerges from all these considerations, must now be attempted. This can best be accomplished by a summary restatement of the basic conclusions reached in the previous chapters coupled with a critical comparison of the prophet and the sage.

Despite the fact that the rabbis never claimed prophetic standing, they treated the prophet neither as a superbeing nor as an inscrutable and unapproachable specimen. The rabbis have, in fact, looked upon themselves as the rightful successors to the prophets. Although they acted as inferior to the prophets in certain regards, this behavior was more than compensated for by their considering themselves as equal or as superior to the prophets in other regards. It is for this reason that in rabbinic exegesis many a Biblical verse is interpreted to refer simultaneously to prophet and sage. Both are included in the phrase, "the keepers of my commandments" (Ex. 20:6).[1] Both are given the epithet of angel[2] or divine.[3] The words of both are subsumed under the phrase "the word of God" (Amos 8:12),[4]

---

[1]Mekilta, baḥodesh, 6, p. 227.

[2]Derekh Eretz Zuṭa, end; cf. BT Nedarim 20b; BT Ḳiddushin 72a.

[3]Mid. Ps. 138:1.

[4]BT Shabbat 138b.

and the words of both of them are given to a person in a limited measure, as stated in the verse, "He maketh a weight for the spirit" (Job 28:25).[5] The rabbis went so far as to arrogate to themselves Biblical verses which distinctly mention the prophets, such as, "and to my prophets do no harm" (1 Chr. 16:22),[6] or "He revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).[7] All this is in harmony with the case made out by Heschel,[8] and before him, by A. Kook,[9] that the Aggada is the direct descendant and continuation of prophetism.

Upon comparing the total picture of the sage with that of the prophet, we discover that the rabbis have, in certain respects, modelled the sage after their projected image of the prophet, while in other instances the reverse has been the case, the image of the prophet being drawn from the familiar picture of the living sage. Whether these intrusions and interminglings took place subconsciously or were the results of the considered opinion of the rabbis that the sage and the prophet share common ground, is immaterial. Apparently, the rabbis, though far removed in time, but having spent a good part of their life in the all-consuming study of the Prophets,

---

[5]Lev. R. 15:2, p. 322.

[6]BT Shabbat 119b.

[7]Yalḳ. Shim., ad loc.; Mid. Samuel 14:1.

[8]Torah Min ha-Shamayim, p. XIX.

[9]Igrot ha-Re'iyah, 103.

lived vicariously the lives of the prophets, with the result, that often the image of the prophet and sage coalesced. But, as we shall see later on, the rabbis were nevertheless well aware of the many differences which separate the sage from the prophet, and thus even in their mind the prophet remained a distinct and recognizable character.

What are these mutual similarities? The sages claimed for themselves the selfsame source for their knowledge as that of the prophets for their oracles. Both the teaching of the sage and the oracle of the prophet originate at Sinai in a unique revelation which will, in due course, manifest itself to the appropriate person. Thus, interestingly, when a sage taught something fallacious, he was aptly labelled "cut off from Mt. Sinai."[10] But, while the sage was given thirteen hermeneutical rules with which to operate in his endeavor to search out the teachings revealed at Sinai, the prophet does not have all these tools at his disposal. However, even such distinct academic tools were not altogether denied the prophet, as he was permitted to expand his message at least by means of the hermeneutical rule of <u>a fortiori</u>,[11] the result of which he was able to report as a divine communication.

Both the prophet and the sage are the commissioned guardians of the Law, as implied in the rabbinic comment on the

---

[10]PT Sanhedrin 4:1, p. 22a.

[11]BT Sanhedrin 89a.

phrase, "and to the keepers of My commandments" (Ex. 20:6), which asserts: "These are the prophets and the sages."[12] There is, however, a difference in the means to be employed. The prophet performs this task by serving as the conscience of his people and the mouthpiece of God, by being ever ready to denounce mercilessly any breach in the observance of the Law and by being able to foretell accurately the punishment which will ensue. The sage, in addition to his instructive and moving preachments, is also endowed with the special power to institute "protective fences" around the Law in the form of gezerot and takkanot, whose main purpose is to enhance and insure the stricter observance of the Law itself.

So far as the possibility of error is concerned, neither sage nor prophet is fully exempt. Both are fallible. The sage may err in his teachings and decisions[13] and the prophet may fail to grasp the full scope or true meaning of his message. Both are also liable to fall into the clutches of sin, even to the extreme. Thus, as the sages had their apostate, Elisha b. Abuya,[14] the prophets had their renegade, Balaam or Ḥanania b. Azur.[15] In either case, there is no retroactive invalidation. Neither the correctness of the sage's teaching nor the authenticity of the prophet's message

---

[12] Supra, note 1.

[13] E. g. BT Giṭṭin 43a.

[14] BT Ḥagigah 14b, and parallels.

[15] PT Sanhedrin 11:7. p. 30b.

is impugned because of the subsequent apostasy of the sage who taught it or the prophet who brought it.

The portrayal of the relationship between the master prophet and his disciples is taken to a large degree from the realities of the Talmudic academy of the day. Thus Joshua is reputed to have busied himself with the arranging of the benches and the spreading out of the mats,[16] as was customary in the Talmudic academy. Haggai is described as having sat on an overturned mortar in the manner of a Talmudic sage.[17] The prophetic school is called by the same name, "beit ulphana"[18] or "beit talmud,"[19] as the rabbinic school. This identification went so far as to refer to the prophets as "rabbanan" (our rabbis),[20] and to an individual prophet as "rabbenu" (our rabbi).[21] In several rabbinic accounts, we find a prophet applying to his master the title "rabbi."[22]

Accordingly, a disciple is forbidden to prophesy in the proximity of his master without the master's authorization. When Eldad and Medad prophesied without the knowledge of Moses (Num. 11:26), Joshua, according to a rabbinic comment, invoked the ruling which prohibits a disciple to decide a point of law in the presence of his master.[23]

---

[16]Num. R. 21:15. [17]BT Yebamot 16a.

[18]Targ. J. to 1 Sam. 19:18. [19]Lev. R. 10:2, p. 197.

[20]BT Yoma 69b. [21]PSRK, Buber, p. 128b; Cant. R. 3:3.

[22]Cant. R. 7:13; Lam. R. 1:61.

[23]BT Sanhedrin 17a.

Just as the ordination of the sage was restricted to the soil of the Land of Israel,[24] prophecy, too, was considered the prerogative of the Land of Israel, and no prophet could rise outside of it. The authoritative teaching of the sages and the divine revelations of the prophets were both mediated through the Temple in Jerusalem. No matter where the prophet may have been, he received his oracle by way of the Temple. A sage who disputed a ruling handed down by the Sanhedrin was not subject to capital punishment unless the ruling issued from the Sanhedrin located in its office in the Temple.[25]

Considering themselves the equals of the prophets, the rabbis appropriated some of the prerogatives of prophetism. The selection of the intended locale for the Temple may be effected not only through the revelation of the prophet, but also through the research of the sage. The sages, under certain conditions, may suspend the operation of a Biblical commandment. They admittedly derive this power of theirs from the power granted to the prophet to do likewise.[26]

In comparing the rabbinic teachings to the Pentateuch, the rabbis make use of a parable similar to the one they use in comparing the Prophets to the Pentateuch. In both instances the Pentateuch is likened to grain, but the prophetic[27] and

---

[24] BT Sanhedrin 14a; PT Bikkurim 3:3, p. 65d.

[25] Sifre to Deut. 17:10; cf. BT Sanhedrin 14b, 52b, 87a.

[26] BT Yebamot 90b, and Tosafot, ad loc.

[27] Shir ha-Shirim Zuṭa 1:1, and parallels.

rabbinic dicta[28] to some sort of reprocessing thereof. Also, with regard to the authority of the rabbinic teachings, the rabbis have treated this authority with no less rigor than in the case of the oracles of the prophets. Consequently, whoever transgresses a rabbinic injunction is as liable to the penalty of heavenly death as one who disobeys the commandment of a prophet. To quote: "Whosoever transgresses the words of the sages is liable to death."[29]

However, despite these and other matters in which the sage shares common ground with the prophet, the rabbis have not altogether intermingled the two. The rabbis were fully cognizant of the wide gulf that separates one from the other, sometimes to the advantage of one, while at other times to the advantage of the other.

Although the rabbis hold fast to the principle that everything found in the Prophets is adumbrated in the Pentateuch, the Prophets are an essentially different entity. In a sense, the Prophets may be considered a distillation of the Pentateuch. This process of distillation being irreversible, the end result is an entirely new product, and in this instance, inferior to the original. Even the words of Moses have no place in the Pentateuch when spoken by him qua prophet. The exclusion of the eleven psalms attributed to Moses from the Pentateuch is explained by the rabbis on the ground that "he said them in the form of prophecy."[30]

---

[28]Seder Eliahu Zuṭa, chap. 2, p. 171.

[29]BT Berakhot 4b; BT Erubin 21b. [30]Mid. Ps. 90:4.

Because the rabbis jealously maintained the utter dichotomy between the Prophets and the Law, they denied the prophet, in his capacity as prophet, any part in the process of the unfolding of the Halakha. In fact, the Holy Spirit of prophecy represents a divine quality different from the one which the Torah in its idealized form represents. In view of the superiority of the Law over the Prophets, which are at best a distillation of the ethereal fragrance of the Law, the rabbis boldly asserted that the "sage," who is the exponent of the Law, "is superior to the prophet."[31]

Paradoxically, even though the prophet may enter into a colloquy with God, while the sage does not, the authority of the sage is greater. For the prophet must wait for a divine communication, while the sage is free to pursue the exploration of the Law on his own initiative. Furthermore, the sage is able to ignore any divine interference in his reaching any conclusion in matters of Halakha. God Himself is subject, as it were, to the due Halakhic processes. In the words of the rabbis: "I have sold Myself with it [i.e. the Law]"[32]

Thus, the sage bears at all times the marks of his office, whereas the prophet is without authority when he is not receiving or delivering a divine message. Every prophecy may be his last one. The person of the prophet enjoys at such time, at best, only the residual aftereffects of prophetism.

---

[31] BT Baba Batra 12a.

[32] Ex. R. 33:7.

Whereas the avenues leading to prophecy are strewn with impediments, there are hardly any obstacles on the academic road of the sage, save that of an inferior intelligence. Sinfulness, illegitimacy of birth, uncircumcision, physical defectiveness, old age, the existence of a more qualified prophet, the unworthiness of the people, each one of these may act to bar or hinder or hamper the aspirant prophet. There is only one handicap relevant to the sage but not to the prophet. With regard to prophecy the woman is at no disadvantage, and thus we find the prophetess exercising her office side by side with the prophet. But being a woman is a definite handicap in becoming a sage. Women, being exempt from the duty of studying the Law,[33] were barred from the academy,[34] and thus had no opportunity to qualify as sages. Hence no women sages are to be found, while we find prophetesses aplenty.

Unlike the sage whose basic prerequisite is a thorough knowledge of the Law, the would-be prophet must possess certain qualifications to make him eligible. He must possess wisdom, strength, riches and stature. By wisdom is meant wordly and human wisdom, which is indispensable for successful service in the prophetic cause. Strength, on its passive side, calls for a strong psyche which will be able to withstand the overwhelming impact of the prophetic event, while on its active

---

[33] BT Kiddushin 29b.

[34] BT Mo'ed Katan 18a.

side, it calls for the courage to enter into a full-dress debate with God. The quality of riches represents the fearlessness to venture out and speak roughly, to call God, as it were, to task, and to go so far as to question divine wisdom and divine justice. The prophet must be tall of stature, that is, of brave bearing, in order thus to be a proud and undaunted exponent of his office.

All these are necessary prerequisites, but not sufficient in themselves. There is a variety of virtues and merits each of which serves as sufficient qualification. Prophecy may be attained by escalation through a graded scale of virtues such as that enumerated by R. Pinḥas b. Yair.[35] It may be a reward for a singular meritorious deed. It may also come by dint of Divine Grace, which will transform one into a vehicle worthy of prophecy. In every instance, however, when prophecy has been attained, a metamorphosis in the personality of the prophet takes place, and when he is on a divine mission, his appearance is as radiant and as awe-inspiring as that of an angel.

Because of the multiplicity of roads to prophecy, it becomes self evident that the legitimation of the prophet will correspondingly call for different methods. In one instance it may be the performance of a miracle or the producing of a

---

[35]Mishna Soṭa, end.

sign. At times it may be simply by the content of his message and by the nature of his bearing. In all instances, except when confirmed by an established prophet, he will have to be accredited by the supreme body of sages in his day.

Even though the rabbis were vitally concerned with the problem of how to ascertain the authenticity of the true prophet, the nagging question as to how the prophet himself was certain that he was not the victim of self-delusion was of no real concern to them. To the modern mind, lacking the experience of divine communication, this can be a vexing and perplexing problem. But to the sages, who themselves claimed all sorts of divine illumination, though not of the same intensity as that of prophecy, such a problem could hardly pose any difficulty. Having first-hand knowledge, they knew that a divine encounter brings with it its own certitude.

However, regardless of the many affinities between the sage and the prophet in the realm of the Holy Spirit, there is a line of demarcation between them. The divine illuminations and revelatory knowledge experienced by many a sage are of an essentially different character. The sage did not experience an encounter, a Locution being addressed particularly to him so that he could respond and turn it into a two-way conversation. These revelations were informative in nature and served as a means of disclosing secrets. They had no edifying or instructive purpose. They may have been attended by visionary or other

psychic phenomena,[36] but they lacked, nevertheless, the direct and personal address. These disclosures were devoid of any charge or imperative, and the sage was thus under no compulsion to act in accordance with their contents. He was free to ignore them and reject them out of hand. Certainly, he was powerless to require of others that they conform to them.

The prophet, on the other hand, experienced a confrontation, a Locution being addressed to him in such a way that he was fully in a position to enter into a two-way conversation. It carried with it a charge which he was constrained to accept, even though permitted to argue and to try to beg off. A refusal to carry out the charge is punishable by heavenly death. By the same token he was empowered to demand total compliance with the dictate of his charge, and those who refused were liable to the penalty of heavenly death. Thus the rabbis aptly refer to the Prophets with the metonym "divrei kabbala,"words of obedience, that is, words to be obeyed, as this is indeed characteristic of the prophetic mandate.

The spoken word of the prophet is of an entirely different character from that of the sage. While the words of the sage are of a purely communicative nature, those of the

---

[36]Cf. BT Sanhedrin 97b,98a,104b; BT Ta'anit 25a; PT Hagigah 2:1, p. 77a; Ex. R. 15:20; Seder Eliahu R., chap. 28, p.149. These sources tend to contravene Kadushin's contention that "it was unaccompanied by psychic phenomena such as visions and locutions." (The Rabbinic Mind, p. 252). That the sages do not generally tell us about the psychic phenomena attending their experiencing of divine illuminations is no proof that such were not present. For that matter, neither do the prophets give us an account of the psychic phenomena attending every prophecy which they delivered.

of the prophet were much more than that. Being a transmission of the original message, the utterance of the prophet is, in a sense, a rebroadcasting of the message as originally received. As a result, the sage is permitted to deliver his teaching by means of a meturgeman (interpreter), as was indeed customary in Talmudic times.[37] The prophet, however, could not make use of a spokesman to deliver his oracle on his behalf. He had to deliver it in person, and thus his delivery was truly an act of prophesying as such. Before the prophet delivers his oracle, it is in a state of inactivity. But as soon as he delivers it, a chain of events leading to the fulfilment of his prediction is set in motion.

It should be added that even the prophet may at times experience such divine illuminations as are characteristic of the sage, and in those instances he will in no wise be different from the sage. This can be seen in the rabbinic assertion that once a prophecy is given to one prophet, all other living prophets are apprised of its content. The other prophets are, however, forbidden to prophesy it under the pain of heavenly death.[38] What is implied in this assertion is that the nature of their knowledge, lacking the prophetic

---

[37] See M. Jastrow, Dictionary, s. v. Amora; E. Z. Melamed, Mavo le-Safrut ha-Talmud, p. 74.

[38] BT Sanhedrin 89a, b.

charge and the direct address, cannot be delivered as a prophecy. Only a prophecy received in an encounter with the Holy Spirit, hammered out through a mutual exchange of views and feelings, carries with it a divine mandate directing all to listen and obey.

Aside from these essential characteristics of prophetic revelation not shared by the sage, there are at least two important powers given to the prophet which the sages dared not claim. These are: the power to create Scripture and the authority to record history.

The teachings of the sages could never become sacred Scripture in such a manner as to become subject to interpretation by the hermeneutical rules applying to the Pentateuch. This body of teachings had to be taught orally, and it was, in fact, forbidden to be committed to writing. Even when, because of exigency, it was finally written down, the written record was not accorded authoritative standing. It was given only the status of aide-memoire.[39] The prophet alone was given the power of the pen, he alone being authorized to add to the Scriptures. His written record was possessed of an authority inherent in the formulation of the written word, almost equal to that of the Pentateuch, inasmuch as it became subject to the identical method of exegesis. The writing power of the prophet extended

---

[39]Cf. H. Albeck, Mavo la-Mishna, 1959, pp. 111-115.

even to the Halakha. Although laws given orally to Moses were forbidden to be recorded, the prophet was at liberty to do so in the context of his prophetic record. Thus the prophet was able to transform an oral law into a written law with all the concomitants thereof.

Finally, the recording of authoritative history was within the exclusive domain of the prophet. True, the sages also recorded historical events, but these records were never intended to be anywhere near in value to that of their teachings because these were never recorded by them ex cathedra, in their capacity as sages. Only the prophet was empowered to record history ex cathedra, thus making it an integral part of Scripture possessed of moral value equal to that of any prophetic communication.

This writing power of the prophet is strikingly evident in the Talmudic account in which "Esther sent to the sages saying: Write an account of me for posterity. They sent back an answer: 'Have I not written for thee three times (Prov. 22:20),' three times and not four!"[40] In other words, the sages have no power to create a fourth layer of Scripture. A Tannaitic source in search of proof that Esther is to be reckoned as one of the prophetesses finds it in the verse, "Then Esther...wrote down all the acts of power..." (Es. 9:29),[41]

---

[40]BT Megillah 7a, and cf. Riṭba ad loc. and Tan., yitro, 6.

[41]Seder Olam R., chap. 21.

thus showing that the power of writing belongs to prophetism and to no other category.

The relationship between the prophet and his people is altogether different from that of the sage with his people. The sage may act as a representative, as a leader or as a primus inter pares. His merits or suffering or prayer may bring atonement or succor to his people. The prophet, however, is different as he is the alter ego, the miniaturization of his people. As such, his prayer or his suffering is directly attributable to his people, whose feelings he reflects and expresses. Thus, when the people are unworthy, prophecy ceases not only as punishment, but also because it is quite naturally choked off, since it would be impossible for the prophet at the same time to identify himself with his people and to act as its other self.

There are several sins which are responsible for the ultimate cessation of prophecy. First of all, those sins that brought about the destruction of the First Temple were also the cause of the extinction of prophecy. Then too, there was the specific sin of the many mistreatments of the prophets by the people, thus making the people unworthy of having prophets, and also thereby rendering the prophets ineffective and of no use, Finally, it was the sin of the Babylonian exiles who, in the great majority, failed to heed the redemptive call to return to Zion, choosing instead to remain in captive Babylonia.

However, the hope is held out that with the final redemption in Messianic times, prophecy will return to Israel. The nature and tasks of prophetism during Messianic times will of necessity undergo certain readjustments in accordance with the changed conditions and the higher level of morality envisaged for these times.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADRN	Aboth de Rabbi Nathan
Agg. Ber.	Aggadat Bereshit
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures.
BT	Babylonian Talmud
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review (new series, unless otherwise stated)
Mekilta de RSBY	Mekilta de Rabbi Shime'on ben Yoḥai
Mid.	Midrash
PRE	Pirḳei Rabbi Eliezer
Pesiḳ. R.	Pesiḳta Rabbati
PSRK	Pesiḳta de Rav Kahana
PT	Palestinian Talmud
PTR	Princeton Theological Review
R.	Rabbi or Rav or Rabbah or Rabbati
Tan.	Tanḥuma
Targ. J.	Targum Jonathan
Targ. O.	Targum Onkelos
Tosef.	Tosefta
VT	Vetus Testamentum
Yalk. Shim.	Yalḳut Shime'oni
Z.	Zuṭa
ZAW	Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

A. SOURCES

(Talmudic and midrashic)

Aboth de R. Nathan, ed. Schechter, Wien, 1887.

Aggadat Bereshit, ed. Buber, Krakau, 1903.

Aggadat Esther, ed. Buber, Krakau, 1897.

Batei Midrashot, ed. Wertheimer, Jerusalem, 1959.

Bereshit Rabbati, ed. Albeck, Jerusalem, 1940.

Bet ha-Midrash, ed. Jellinek, Jerusalem, 1938.

Deuteronomy Rabba, New York, 1945; ed. Lieberman, Jerusalem, 1940.

Exodus Rabba, New York, 1945.

Genesis Rabba, ed. Theodor-Albeck, Berlin, 1912-36.

Haggadah shel Pesaḥ, ed. Goldschmidt, Jerusalem, 1948.

Leḳaḥ Ṭov, Jerusalem, 1960.

Leviticus Rabba, ed. Margulies, Jerusalem, 1953-60.

Maskehet Soferim, ed. Higger, New York, 1937.

Mekilta, ed. Horovitz, Leipzig, 1931.

Mekilta de R. Shime'on b. Yoḥai, ed. Epstein-Melamed, Jerusalem, 1955.

Pesiḳta de Rav Kahana, ed. Buber, Lyck, 1868; ed. Mandelbaum, New York, 1962.

Pesiḳta Rabbati, ed. Friedmann, Wien, 1880.

Pirḳei R. Eliezer, ed. Luria, Warsaw, 1852.

Midrash Aggada, ed. Buber, Wien, 1894.

Midrash ha-Gadol to Gen., ed. Margulies, Jerusalem, 1947.

_____ to Ex., ed. Margulies, Jerusalem, 1956.

_____ to Lev., ed. Rabinowitz, N.Y. 1932.

_____ to Num., ed. Fisch, London, 1957.

Midrash Mishlei, ed. Buber, Wilna, 1893.

Midrash Rabba to Five Scrolls, New York, 1945.

Midrash Samuel, ed. Buber, Krakau, 1893.

Midrash Shir ha-Shirim, ed. Gruenhut, Jerusalem, 1897.

Midrash Tannaim, ed. Hoffmann, Berlin, 1908.

Midrash Tehillim, ed. Buber, N.Y., 1947.

Midrash Zuṭa to Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Kohelet, ed. Buber, Berlin, 1894.

Mishnat R. Eliezer, ed. Enelow, New York, 1933.

Seder Eliahu Rabba and Zuṭa, ed. Friedmann, Wien, 1904.

Seder Olam Rabba and Zuṭa, New York, 1952.

Shev'a Masekhtot Ḳetanot, ed. Higger, New York, 1930.

Sifra, ed. Weiss, Wien, 1862.

Sifre to Numbers, ed. Horovitz, Leipzig, 1917.

Sifre to Deuteronomy, ed. Finkelstein, Berlin, 1940.

Sifre Zuṭa, ed. Horovitz, Leipzig, 1917.

Sifrei de-Aggadeta al Megillat Esther, ed. Buber, Wilna, 1886.

Talmud Babli, N.Y., 1948.

Talmud Yerushalmi, N.Y., 1948 (Offset, Krotoshin-Venice Ed.)

Tanḥuma, Lublin, 1893; ed. Buber, New York, 1946.

Tosefta, ed. Zuckermandel, Jerusalem, 1937; ed. Lieberman, Zera'im, New York, 1955; Mo'ed, New York, 1962.

Yalḳut Shime'oni, New York, 1944.

B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Abelson, J. The Immanence of God in Rabbinic Literature. London, 1912.

Ashkenazi, B. (ed.) Shiṭah Meḳubetzet. 5 vols. Warsaw, 1901.

Azulai, Ch. Y. D. Petaḥ Enayim. 2 vols. Jerusalem, 1959.

Babad, J. Minhat Ḥinukh. New York, [1943].

Bass, E. Die Merkmale der israelitischen Prophetie nach der traditionellen Auffasung des Talmud. Kirchhain, [1917].

Berlin, N. Z. Y. Ha'amek She'alah (Commentary to She'eltot). 3 vols. Wilna, 1861-67.

Brull, J. Ben Zekunim. Drohobycz, 1889.

Chajes, Z. H. Torat Neviim. Zolkiew, 1836.

Cohen, A. Everyman's Talmud. New York, 1949.

Edels, S. Ḥidushei Meharsha (Printed in back of Talmud Babli). New York, 1948.

Elyakim, J. (ed.) Sha'arei Teshuva (Geonic Responsa). Salonica, 1802.

Ginzberg, L. Perushim ve-Ḥidushim ba-Yerushalmi. 4 vols. New York, 1941-61.

Gordon, A. L. (ed.) Siddur Otzar ha-Tefillot. 2 vols. New York, 1946.

Heinemann, I. Darkei ha-Aggada. 2d. ed. Jerusalem, 1954.

Heschel, A. J. Torah Min ha-Shamayim. London and New York, 1962.

Higger, M. The Jewish Utopia. Baltimore, 1932.

Hoffmann, D. Commentary to Deuteronomy (Heb. trans.). Tel-Aviv, 1959.

Ibn Ezra, A. Commentary to Bible (Heb.) in Mikra'ot Gedolot. New York, 1945.

Kadushin, M. The Theology of Seder Eliahu. New York, 1932.

_____. The Rabbinic Mind. New York, 1952.

Kahan, M. S. Meshekh Hokhma. Jerusalem, 1954.

Kimḥi, D. Commentary to Bible (Heb.). in Mikra'ot Gedolot. New York, 1945.

Karo, J. Shulhan Arukh. New York, 1945.

Lampronti, I. Pahad Yitzhak. 10 vols. Venice, 1750-1888.

Lauterbach, J. Z. Rabbinic Essays. Cincinnati, 1951.

Lieberman, S. Hellenism in Jewish Palestine. New York, 1950.

_____. Tosefta ki-Fshuṭah. New York, 1955-62.

Maimonides, M. Mishneh Torah. 5 vols. New York, 1953.

_____. Perush ha-Mishna (Printed in back of Talmud Babli). New York, 1948.

Malbim, M. Commentary to Bible (Heb.). New York, 1950.

Margulies, R. Margaliot ha-Yam. 2 vols. Jerusalem, 1958.

Marmorstein, A. The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God. 2 vols. London, 1927.

Meiri, M. Beit ha-Beḥirah (to BT Sanhedrin). Frankfurt A. M., 1930.

_____. Kiryat Sefer. Jerusalem, 1957.

Moore, G. F. Judaism. 3 vols. Cambridge, 1927.

Nachmanides, M. Perushei ha-Torah la-Ramban. 2 vols. Jerusalem, 1959-60.

Rozin, J. Zophnat Pa'aneah. Warsaw, 1902.

Schatzkes, M. A. Ha-Mafteach. 2 vols. New York, 1929.

Schechter, S. Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology. New York, 1923.

Silberg, M, Kakh Darko shel Talmud. Jerusalem, 1961.

Strack, H. C. & Billerbeck, P. Commentar zum N. T. aus Talmud und Midrasch. 5 vols. Muenchen, 1922-28.

Yom Ṭov ben Abraham. Hidushei ha-Ritba. 5 vols. New York, 1952.

Zevin, S. J. (ed.) Entziklopedia Talmudit. 11 vols. Jerusalem, 1947-

Articles

Abrahams, I. "Some Egyptian Fragments in the Passover Hagada," Jewish Quarterly Review, o.s. X (1897-98), 41-51.

Bamberger, B. J. "Revelation of Torah After Sinai," Hebrew Union College Annual, XVI (1941), 97-113.

_____. "The Dating of Aggadic Materials," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVIII (1949), 115-23.

Fischel, H. A. "Martyr and Prophet," Jewish Quarterly Review, XXXVII (1947), 265-80.

Glatzer, N. "A Study of the Talmudic Interpretation of Prophecy," Review of Religion, X (1946), 115-37.

Guttman, A. "Significance of Miracles for Talmudic Judaism," Hebrew Union College Annual, XX (1945), 363-408.

Kadushin, M. "Rabbinic Concept of Israel," Hebrew Union College Annual, XIX (1946), 57-96.

Kahane, K. "Thirteen Locutions that were said to Moses and Aaron," (Heb.), Leo Jung Jubilee Volume. (New York, 1962), 107-19.

Lauterbach, J. Z. "Misunderstood Chronological Statements in the Talmudic Literature," Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research, 1934, 77-84.

_____. "The Belief in the Power of the Word," Hebrew Union College Annual, XIV (1939), 287-302.

Moore, G. F. "Intermediaries in Jewish Theology," Harvard Theological Review, XV (1922), 146-73.

Parzen, H. "The Ruaḥ Haḳodesh in Tannaitic Literature," Jewish Quarterly Review, XX (1930), 50-76.

Schwab, S. "Comparative Jewish Chronology," Joseph Breuer Jubilee Volume (New York, 1962), 177-97.

Schwartzchild, S. "Do Noachides Have to Believe in Revelation," Jewish Quarterly Review, LII (1962), 297-308.

Urbach, E. "When Did Prophecy Cease" (Heb.), Tarbiz, XVII (1945), 1-11.

_____. "Halakha and Prophecy" (Heb.), Tarbiz, XVIII, (1946), 1-27.

_____. "Rabbinic Comments Concerning Heathen Prophets" (Heb.), Tarbiz, XXV (1953), 272-89.

_____. "Aggada" (Heb.), Ha-Entziklopedia ha-Ivrit, V. I, 353-65.

C. GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Albeck, H. Mavo la-Mishna. Jerusalem, 1959.

Albo, J. Ikkarim. Tel-Aviv, 1950.

Arama, I. Akedat Yitzhak. 3 vols. Warsaw, 1883.

Bacon, F. Essays. Baltimore, 1893.

Baron, S. W. A Social and Religious History of the Jews. 2d. ed. revised and enlarged. 8 vols. Philadelphia, 1952-58.

Blau, J. L. The Story of Jewish Philosophy. New York, 1962.

Bright, J. A History of Israel. Philadelphia, 1959.

Buber, M. Torat ha-Neviim. Tel-Aviv, 1942.

Budde, K. Geschichte der althebräischen Litteratur. Leipzig, 1906.

Buechler A. Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety. London, 1922.

Charles, R. H. Religious Development between Old and New Testaments. New York, 1914.

Cook, S. A. Old Testament: A Reinterpretation. Cambridge, 1936.

De Vaux, R. Ancient Israel. Translated by J. McHugh. New York, Toronto and London, 1961.

Duhm, B. Israels Propheten. Tubingen, 1916.

Efros, I. Ha-philosophia ha-Yehudit ha-atika. Jerusalem, 1959.

Epstein, I. The Faith of Israel. London, 1954.

Finkelsrein, L. The Pharisees. 2d. ed. 2 vols. Philadelphia, 1940.

_____. Mabo le-Massektot Abot ve-Abot d'Rabbi Natan. New York, 1950.

Frankel, Z. Darkei ha-Mishna. Tel-Aviv, 1959.

Gerondi, N. Derashot ha-Ran. Jerusalem, 1959.

Gordis, R. Kohelet. New York, 1955.

_____. A Faith for Moderns. New York, 1960.

Graetz, H. History of the Jews (Eng. trans.). 6 vols. Philadelphia, 1895.

Guillaume, A. Prophecy and Divination. London, 1938.

Haldar, A. Association of Cult Prophets Among Ancient Semites. Uppsala, 1945.

Ha-Levi, Y. Kuzari. Tel-Aviv, 1948.

Harnak, A. The Expansion of Christianity. Translated by J. Moffat. New York, 1908.

He-Hasid, Y. Sefer Hasidim (ed. Wistinetzki). Berlin, 1891-93.

Heiler, F. Prayer. Translated by S. McComb. London, 1932.

Heschel, A. J. Die Prophetie. Krakow, 1936.

_____. God in Search of Man. New York, 1955.

_____. The Prophets. New York, 1962.

Hoelscher, G. Die Profeten. Leipzig, 1914.

Horodetzki, A. S. Ha-Mistorin be-Yisrael. 2d. ed. 4 vols. Tel-Aviv, 1951-61.

Hoschander, J. The Priests and the Prophets. New York, 1938.

Husik, I. A History of Jewish Philosophy. Philadelphia, 1916.

Hyatt, J. P. Prophetic Religion. New York, 1947.

Jacob of Marvège. She'elot u-Teshuvot min ha-Shamayim. Jerusalem, 1957.

Jepsen, A. Nabi. Muenchen, 1934.

Johnson, A. R. The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God. Cardiff, 1942.

_____. The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel. Cardiff, 194

Josephus, F. The Antiquities of the Jews. Philadelphia, 1860.

Kadushin, M. Organic Thinking; a Study in Rabbinic Thought. New York, 1938.

Kaminka, A. Mehkarim. 2 vols. Tel-Aviv, 1938-51.

Katsh, A. I. Judaism in Islam. New York, 1954.

Kaufman, Y. Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisr'elit. 8 vols. Tel-Aviv, 1937-56.

Kittel, R. Geschichte des Volkes Israel. 2 vols. Stuttgart-Gotha, 1923-25.

Klausner, J. Ha-Ra'yon ha-Meshihi be-Yisrael. 3d. ed. Jerusalem, 1950.

Knight, H. The Hebrew Prophetic Consciousness. London, 1947.

Kook, A. I. Igrot ha-Re'iyah. Jerusalem, 1943.

Kuhl, C. The Prophets of Israel. Translated by R. J. Ehrlich and J. P. Smith. Richmond, 1960.

Lindblom, J. The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah. Lund, 1951.

_____. Prophecy in Ancient Israel. Oxford, 1962.

Lods, A. The Prophets and the Rise of Judaism. Translated by S. H. Hooke. London, 1937.

Luzzatto, M. Ch. Derekh ha-Hayyim. Jerusalem, 1946.

_____. Mesillat Yesharim. Edited and translated into English by M. Kaplan. Philadelphia, 1937.

Maimonides, M. Guide of the Perplexed. Translated by M. Friedlander. New York, 1946.

_____. Iggeret Teiman, ed. Halkin. New York, 1952.

Maimuni, A. Megillat Setarim. Jerusalem, 1952.

Mantel, H. Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin. Cambridge, 1961

Melamed, E. Z. Mavo le-Safrut ha-Talmud. Jerusalem, 1954.

Micklen, N. Prophecy and Eschatology. London, 1926.

Neher, A. L'Essence du Prophétisme. Paris, 1955.

Reines, Ch. W. Kohanim u-Neviim. New York, 1945.

Ringgren, H. Israelitische Religion. Stuttgart, 1963.

Robinson, H. W. The Old Testament; Its Making and Meaning. Nashville, 1937.

_____. Redemption and Revelation. London, 1942.

_____. Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament. Oxford, 1946.

_____.(ed.) Record and Revelation. Oxford, 1938.

Robinson, T. H. Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel. New York, 1923.

Rowley, H. H. The Rediscovery of the Old Testament. London, 1946.

_____. The Servant of the Lord. London, 1954.

_____. Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel. London, 1956.

_____. The Faith of Israel. Philadelphia, 1957.

_____.(ed.) Studies in Old Testament Prophecy. Edinburgh, 1950.

_____.(ed.) The Old Testament and Modern Study. Oxford, 1951.

Segal, M. Z. Mevo ha-Mikra. 2d. ed. revised and enlarged. 4 vols. Jerusalem, 1950.

Skinner, J. Prophecy and Religion. Cambridge, 1922.

Smart, J. D. Servants of the Word. Philadelphia, 1960.

Taylor, B. Prophecy and the Prophets. Philadelphia, 1923.

Tchernowitz, Ch. Toledot ha-Halakha. 3 vols. New York, 1934-43.

Thomson, J. The Word of the Lord in Jeremiah. London, 1959.

Trani, M. Beit Elokim. Warsaw, 1882.

Waxman, M. Galut u-Ge'ulah be-Safrut Yisrael. New York, 1952.

Widengren, G. Literary and Psychological Aspects of the Hebrew Prophets. Uppsala, 1948.

Wolfson, H. A. Philo. 2 vols. Cambridge, 1947.

Articles

Agus, J. "The Prophet in Modern Hebrew Literature," Hebrew Union College Annual, XXVIII (1957), 289-324.

Bickerman, E. J. "The Historical Foundations of Post-biblical Judaism," The Jews, ed. L. Finkelstein, vol. I, 70-114.

Brockington, L. H. "Audition in the Old Testament," Journal of Theological Studies, XLIX (1948), 1-8.

Brown, F. "Decline of Prophecy," Essays in Modern Theology and Related Subjects,(New York, 1911), 65-81.

Cadbury, H. J. "Jesus and the Prophets," Journal of Religion, V (1925), 607-22.

Davies, P. E. "Jesus and the Role of the Prophets," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXIV (1945), 241-54.

Efros, I. "Prophecy Wisdom and Apocalypse," M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume. (New York, 1953), 215-23.

_____. "Holiness and Glory in the Bible," Jewish Quarterly Review, XLI (1951), 363-77.

Goldstein-Weiss, E. "L'objet du Prophétisme," La Revue Littéraire Juive, II (1928), 999-1008.

Goodenough, E. R. "Wolfson's Philo," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVII (1948), 87-109.

Heschel, A. J. "Did Maimonides Strive for Prophetic Inspiration," (Heb.), L. Ginzberg Jubilee Vol. (New York, 1945), 159-88.

_____. "Inspiration in the Middle Ages" (Heb.), A. Marx Jubilee Vol. (New York, 1950), 175-208.

Hines, H. W. "The Prophet as Mystic," American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, XL (1923-24), 37-71.

Kretzman, P. E. "Modern Views about Inspiration and the Truth of Scriptures," Princeton Theological Review, XXVII (1929), 227-44.

Lofthouse, W. F. "'Thus Hath J. Said,'" American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, XL (1923-24), 231-51.

Mowinckel, S. "'The Spirit' and 'the Word' in Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets," Journal of Biblical Literature, LIII (1934), 199-227.

Obbink, H. Th. "The Forms of Prophetism," Hebrew Union College Annual, XIV (1939), 23-28.

Paton, L. B. "The Problem of Suffering in the Pre-exilic Prophets," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLVI (1927), 111-31.

Peake, A. "The Roots of Hebrew Prophecy and Jewish Apocalyptic," John Rylands Library, VII (1922-23), 233-55.

Peritz, I. J. "Woman in the Ancient Hebrew Cult," Journal of Biblical Literature, XVII (1898), 141-43.

Robinson, H. W. "The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality," Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXVI (1936), beihefte 66, 49-62.

Rowley, H. H. "The Nature of Prophecy in the Light of Recent Study," Harvard Theological Review, XXXVIII (1945), 1-38.

_____. "Ritual and the Hebrew Prophets," Journal of Semitic Studies, I (1956), 338-60.

Segal, M. Z. "Le-Toledot ha-Neviim be-Yisrael," Essays in Honour of J. H. Hertz. London, 1943. 101-11.

Terrien, S. "Amos and Wisdom," Israel's Prophetic Heritage, Ed. B. Anderson. New York, 1962. 108-15.

Vriezen, Th. C. "Prophecy and Eschatology," supplements to Vetus Testamentum, I (1953), 199-229.

Wolfson, H. A. "Hallevi and Maimonides on Prophecy", Jewish Quarterly Review, XXXII (1942), 345-70; XXXIII (1943), 49-82.

Young, F. W. "Jesus the Prophet," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVIII (1949), 285-99.